

God's Wrath Postponed

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*I dedicate this book
To my father
John W. Turner, Jr.
He was a gentle influence of integrity,
A model for my life.*

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Preface

This book began twenty years when I was a student at Dallas Theological Seminary. It did not start with a study of God's wrath. My original intent was to determine if the atonement of Christ had implication that extended beyond believers. Dr. Frederic Howe, who was then an associate professor of Systematic Theology, granted permission to do an independent study on this topic. At the end of the semester I handed him a three-page outline with the topic and summary of the thesis. The topic was The Cosmological Implications of the Atonement, or a Re-evaluation of Biblical Universalism (thankfully for the publisher and everyone else the name has been changed).

Personally, I was disappointed that I couldn't accomplish more than just the topic, thesis and outline at that time. I will never forget however, Dr. Howe's gracious response. He awarded me an excellent grade, told me it was Ph.D. level material and had me promise that I would finish it after graduation. His approval gave me the hope and confidence to proceed with the study.

For twenty years I've remembered his encouragement and my promise. It has been a primary motivation that has brought this introductory work to conclusion. My time in several ministries as a pastor, area director for an evangelical ministry, and an adjunct professor of Philosophy, Ethics and Religious studies has demanded most of my attention and focus. I am thankful that in recent years I've been given the incentive, health and time to bring this book to fruition.

Though the title and outline has changed, the primary thesis has remained essentially the same. It is my prayer that the following pages are not simply academic to the reader, but will cause a sense of awe and wonder of the love and righteousness of Jesus Christ and the Father that sent Him as an Atonement for us.

Again, I want to extend my thanks for Dr. Frederic Howe for giving me reason to complete this book. A special thanks is extended to the publisher for the opportunity to make the work public. Most of all I want to thank my wife Linda for the 30 wonderful years of marriage in which she has always encouraged, always listened, and always been my love and best friend.

God's Wrath Postponed

PART ONE:

"GOD'S WRATH POSTPONED" AN ANSWER TO BIBLICAL UNIVERSALISM

CHAPTER 1: REASONS FOR "GOD'S WRATH POSTPONED"

I. Introduction: The need for God's Wrath Postponed

For whom did Christ die? Did he die to save all humanity or the elect only? If He died to save all, then why are not all saved? If He died only for the elect (John 5:21; 6:37; 13:18; 15:19; Acts 13:48; Rom. 8:28-30; 9:11-15; Eph. 1:4; Col. 3:12; II Thess. 2:13) why does the Scriptures say He died for all (Isa 53:4-6, 10; I Tim. 4:9,10; I John 2:2; Romans 5:18; II Cor. 5:18,19, etc.)?

The tension between Biblical passages on election and those that imply a universal atonement has resulted in disagreement between Christians for centuries. Theological systems have been formulated in an attempt to resolve these tensions. These systems have caused believers, not just to respond to the gospel but to form an allegiance with one of the several theological camps.¹ Instead of resolving the Biblical issues, the systems have tended to polarize Christians on the issues.² How the tensions are resolved by the systems have enormous implications to our entire understanding of God's character, His revelation, Christ's mission and message, the presentation of His message, and man's relationship and responsibility to God and man.

When speaking about what Christ accomplished on the cross we generally employ the use of the word Atonement. It is a theological term that has come to encompass all that Christ accomplished at Calvary³: reconciliation, redemption, propitiation, deliverance, salvation, justification and forgiveness. In Theology the word is sometimes defined as At-One-Ment; the idea that man and God are restored back to an original relationship of oneness that was lost when Adam sinned. Some have attempted to use the term metaphysically to say that man becomes at one with God, or that man is absorbed into God. This view is pantheistic⁴ and never aligns with the Biblical theism⁵ of the Holiness or separate nature of God. Lewis Sperry Chafer says of the term:

Whether it be accurately or inaccurately employed, the student will become aware of the fact that the word *atonement* is the term upon which men have seized to express the entire work of Christ upon the cross. That such a word is sorely needed cannot be doubted. The

¹ The four primary systems are Strict Calvinism, Moderate Calvinism, Arminianism, and Universalism.

² In recent years there has been an attempt by many Christian teachers to convince their followers that they are not committed to a particular theological persuasion (usually referred to as doctrine), but that they simply teach the Bible. Upon examination of their teachings however, every teacher belongs to some theological system of thought.

³ Some theologians would also include what He accomplished by His life.

⁴ Pantheism means All is God. God and the universe are indistinguishable, that is God is the universe and the universe is God. God is impersonal in pantheism. Because God is indistinguishable from the universe and man is in the universe, man is God and God is man. There are many different forms of pantheism (Hinduism, Buddhism, New Age teachings, etc.) and some of these have made inroads in Christian theology in recent years.

⁵ Theism teaches that God created the universe, is distinguishable from it, and yet actively participates in it. It is foundational to Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

almost universal use of *atonement* for this purpose may go far to give it authoritative acceptance regardless of its inaptitude for the immense service thus thrust upon it. Objection to the use of the term as employed, generally arises from the fact that the word is not a New Testament term, and when used in the Old Testament some seventy-seven times it is a translator's attempt at interpretation and poorly represents the meaning of *kaphar*, which it purports to translate, which word originally meant *to cover*. Though etymologically the *atonement* suggests *at-one-ment*, it feebly relates itself to the New Testament truth which presents Christ as the Lamb of God *taking away* the sin of the world.⁶

We will continue to use the word atonement as a theological term to represent the broad spectrum of Christ's accomplishments on the Cross. Our focus however, will not be to explore all the accomplishments of Christ's work at Calvary, but to determine the reach, scope, or extent of which these accomplishments have been applied to the world, and the implications to the world. Did Christ die to save the "World" or only the "Elect" (those he choose beforehand to be saved)? We are not seeking compromise between Universalism and Election. We are attempting to find an explanation that allows for a literal interpretation of both and thus defending the literal reliability of Scripture.

II. Purpose Statement

My purpose is to introduce a Theological System that resolves the tensions between the passages on election and passages teaching a universal⁷ salvation. The focus will be on the Universal passages. It is the author's contention that the phrases "all are saved" and "only believers are saved" are both legitimate statements. There are neither contradictions nor tensions between the statements. In addition salvation for both "all" and "the elect" is "actual" and not merely "potential"⁸. The system is simple rather than complex. Once the foundational proposition has been understood there will be very little need of elaboration on exceptions and/or complex reasoning⁹ to explain Biblical passages as they relate to the system.

III. Method

My method will be to propose the foundational components of the system, identify key biblical terms and their relationship to the system; and identify significant passages, explain their influence on the system and the systems influence on the passages.

This is an introduction to the system and is not meant to be an elaboration of the system. After being introduced to the system readers will, as they study other passages, recognize other evidences for the system. Interaction with other systems will be restricted to the degree that they help explain the present system and the advantages of this system.

⁶ Chafer, Lewis Sperry, *Systematic Theology*, Vol. III Soteriology, p. 127, Dallas Theological Seminary, Copyright 1948, 14th Printing, Aug. 1980.

⁷ I restrict universal, in the immediate context, to this world rather than to the universe at large.

⁸ The distinction between "actual" and "potential" will become clearer as we progress through the different systems.

IV. Foundational Proposition

The entire physical world was saved from the immediate wrath of God at the time of Christ's death. Christ's atonement postponed God's judgment of the physical cosmos. The result is that Christ saved the creation (which means all humanity) from Father's immediate wrath.

PART TWO: SYSTEMATIC SOLUTIONS TO UNIVERSALISM

CHAPTER 2: THE PROBLEM DEFINED

Theological tension has existed throughout history over the harmonization of biblical passages teaching the salvation of the elect with those teaching the salvation of all humanity. Systems have been developed attempting to deal with the perceived¹⁰ inconsistencies and contradictions between the two groups of passages. Each of the resulting systems has tended to stress one group of passages at the expense of the other.

Can a theological solution be developed which inductively recognizes the force of both predestination and universalism? Does an inductive, literal explanation of one group of passages have to exclude an inductive, literal acceptance of the other group? The author believes that a solution can be formulated which gives integrity to both otherwise contradictory groups of passages.

CHAPTER 3: PREVIOUS SYSTEMATIC SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEM¹¹

Each of the following systems of theology has attempted to resolve theological tensions resulting from a literal interpretation of two sets of perceptually contradictory passages. One set appears to teach that the extent of the atonement was only for those whom God predetermined for salvation. The second set of passages appears to teach that the atonement was for the salvation of all humanity. These systems have developed with the intent to resolve the inconsistencies between the passages.¹²

I. Universalism

Universalism stresses the universal passages. This system concludes that the works of Christ brought (or will bring) salvation to all men. Universalism either ignores the inductive literal interpretation of passages teaching election/predestination or manipulates the meaning of the

⁹ The attempt will be to interpret Scripture with Scripture and avoid philosophical systems and other outside sources in our attempt to interpret Scripture.

¹⁰ It is "perceived" in consistent or contradictory because of man's fallible understanding. God's Word, when correctly interpreted is infallible.

¹¹ The overview is meant to be a generalization of the systems. It is recognized that any generalization excludes teachings from proponents of the systems that are exceptions.

¹² My evaluation of these systems is restricted to each systems interpretation of the universal passages and does not reflect on my deep appreciation for the integrity and reliability of the overall interpretation of entirety of Scripture. I'm especially indebted to the integrity of both Moderate and Strict Calvinism.

text into the universalist system. The desire to stress a universal element of the atonement has resulted in the formation of a theological system that ignores the Scripture's emphasis on the final judgment of the unrighteous.

II. Strict Calvinism

Although not as extreme as Universalism, Strict Calvinism¹³ reverses the imbalance. Attempt to do justice with an inductive explanation of the passages on predestination and final judgment results in neglect of the same principles of interpretation on the universal passages.¹⁴ Not that the passages are ignored, but rather, the literal force of these passages are sacrificed for the sake of the system.¹⁵ Universal elements of the atonement are forced to bow down before the altar of predestination of the elect.¹⁶

III. Arminianism

In response to the tensions of predestination and universalism Arminianism rejects a literal interpretation of both sets of Scriptures. Predestination is weakened by an overemphasis of God's foreknowledge and a denial of God's sovereign decrees. The free will of man becomes a central focus in the system. The recognition of the final judgment of the unrighteous prevents the system from adopting the Universalist's conclusions that all have been or will be saved, but in doing so there is a loss of force in the interpretation of the universal passages.

IV. *Moderate Calvinism*

This system attempts to bring harmony to the universal and predestination passages. There is an attempt to treat both sets of passages with integrity. The Moderate Calvinist takes the foundation of the Strict Calvinist system and modifies it through an inductive analysis of all passages. The error of this system is to be found in the introduction of a hypothetical element at the inductive level. Moderate Calvinism rejects the full ramification of a literal interpretation of Universalism by stating that salvation/deliverance is "provisional" and thus "potentially" available to all people. A close analysis of universal passages however, never teaches anything less than the

¹³ I've chosen the designation "Strict Calvinism" to distinguish this system from Moderate Calvinism. We could have likewise used the designation "Classical or Consistent Calvinism".

¹⁴ The Strict Calvinist does not deny the tensions but uses a principle referred to as "Analogy of Faith". This principle requires "Scripture that explicitly teaches a doctrine" to explain such passages which do not explicitly teach the same doctrine but some other doctrine or aspect of divine truth." Gary D. Long, *Definite Atonement* Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, Co. 1977, p 31)

¹⁵ It seems to the author that the principle of "Analogy of Faith" puts too much confidence in man's logic. We formulate a system of theology, we find inconsistencies between Scripture with our understanding of our system, then we force our understanding of obvious passages onto those passages which do not conform to our system of understanding. Is it not better to recognize that the inconsistencies are in our system and not in God's Word? It is better to either modify the system to conform to Scripture, or if the system can not be modified, find a better system, or recognize the fallibility of the present system until a better system explains the anomalies.

¹⁶ Limited Atonement limits the effects of the Christ's Atonement to those who God predestined to eternal life. Other names given to this doctrine are "Definite Atonement", "Particular Atonement" and "Limited Redemption". My intent in this book is not to debate this doctrine with the Moderate Calvinist doctrine of "Unlimited Atonement". My intent is simply to demonstrate both systems' weaknesses in interpreting the universalist passages.

"actual" salvation/deliverance of all humanity. This hypothetical introduction into the inductive process greatly weakens the structural framework of the Moderate Calvinist's system.¹⁷

CHAPTER 4: "GOD'S WRATH POSTPONED"

I. An Explanation of "God's Wrath Postponed"

Christ death saved the entire physical world from the immediate wrath of God. Thus, the entire cosmos (world) has been literally saved. Passages that speak of the universal salvation of humanity are viewed within the context of a physical salvation. This does not imply that all people have been or will be saved spiritually, or that all people will be spared from God's future wrath.

Salvation¹⁸ in the New Testament has traditionally been viewed from a spiritual perspective. Propitiation, reconciliation and redemption have been restricted to a spiritual plane and have not taken into consideration the possibility of the atonement having major physical implications. Yet, the effects of the atonement include more than just the spiritual salvation of the believing members of humanity. Christ's atonement also spared the entire physical world.

It is suggested here that the atonement of Christ be viewed as impacting two¹⁹ spheres. The first is spiritual and includes the basic orthodox understanding of salvation from a Calvinistic framework. The second is physical or cosmological²⁰ in scope and recognizes an actual salvation of the physical cosmos in time and space. It is in the latter context that we shall understand New Testament Universalism.

In order to understand what is meant by physical (cosmological) salvation the circumstances surrounding the Cross of Christ as it relates to the total picture of special revelation must be constructed. In Genesis 15:16, God promised Abraham that the land owned by the Ammonites would one day be in the possession of Abraham's descendants. God would give this land to his descendants once the sins of the Ammonites had reached their full measure. The reception of the land was dependent upon the sinful condition of the previous owners. Israel is to be viewed as God's tool of judgment on the wicked nation. This principle is repeated in Deut. 9:4-6. Moses warns the Israelites not to think that God had brought them into the land because of their own righteousness. Rather, it is because of the wickedness of the other nations that God was

¹⁷ The following is a representative statement of Moderated Calvinism, "The atonement is *sufficient* for all; it is *efficient* for those who believe in Christ. The atonement itself, so far as it lays the basis for the redemptive dealing of God with all men, is *unlimited*; the *application* of the atonement is limited to those who actually believe in Christ. He is the Savior of all men *potentially* (1 Tim. 1:15); of believers alone *effectually* (1 Tim. 4:10). The atonement is limited only by men's unbelief. Evans, W., & Coder, S. M. (1998, c1974). *The great doctrines of the Bible*. Includes index. (Enl. ed. /). Chicago: Moody Press.

¹⁸ The system within Systematic Theology explaining Salvation is referred to by theologians as Soteriology.

¹⁹ There are actually three realms of salvation. There is 1) a salvation of the entire universe. Christ is proclaimed the creator of the universe (Col. 1:16) and not just this world or man. His actions on the cross were also applied in some sense to the heavenly beings. There is 2) a salvation of this world we call earth and all its inhabitants and 3) there is a salvation of the faithful in Christ.

²⁰ I've adopted the term cosmological (from the Greek kosmos) to mean the earth. I've avoided the term cosmic because its English usage has come to mean universe. I'm restricting our usage here to salvation of this world, not the universe at large.

giving them the land. Israel is presented in these passages as an instrument of God's divine wrath upon the wicked nations.

The Jews understood this concept to be a literal element in the establishment of the Kingdom. Messiah's entrance and establishment of His Kingdom would necessitate the overthrow and submission of the nations (Psalm 2; Isaiah 49:22-26; 63:1-6; Ezekiel 36:1-34; Joel 3:1-16; Micah 7:8-13).

Upon this essential component we must view the entrance of the Messiah into the world. For Him to enter the world and offer the Kingdom to the nation of Israel (Matthew 1-12) the nations of the world had to have reached a level of corruption that initiated God to bring His judgment upon them.

When the nation of Israel rejected the Messiah and the establishment of His Kingdom they canceled themselves out of the immediate blessing and entered into condemnation with the other nations, thus stepping into God's divine judgment. As a result, **the entire world stood in a state of condemnation.** The divine wrath of God was ready to be poured out on the whole world.

The Cross, at this point, becomes the greatest paradox of history. Instead of this murder sealing the verdict, the murdered Son, by substitution, judiciously received the wrath of God prepared for the world upon Himself, thus becoming the propitiation for sin (1 John 2:2) and reconciling the world to the Father (2 Corinthians 5:15). By world, I mean the literal, physical cosmos. Christ saved the physical world from the wrath of God. He purchased²¹ it from the Father for Himself. If Christ had not interceded-- the earth would have been destroyed along with all life on it.

This view does not teach that the whole world will be saved from God's future wrath or that all humanity has been saved spiritually. It introduces an overlooked aspect into doctrine of salvation. The physical world has been spared in time and space from God's wrath at the crucifixion. This could be understood in the context of God's willingness to physically spare mankind for the sake of preserving and gathering up His future elect, just as He told Abraham He would spare Sodom and Gomorra for the sake of a handful of the righteous people living among them.

An understanding of the Soteriological plan for the elect is not changed by this view. What is changed is our understanding of the universal passages in the New Testament. The world has not been "potentially" or even "provisionally"²² saved, neither is it promised that "all" will be saved, but it has been "actually" saved from God's immediate wrath at the time of the Cross.

II. Proposition Summarized

Christ died for the whole world by taking God's immediate wrath upon Himself, thus postponing the destruction of the cosmos until a later time. Even as the righteousness of Noah spared the world and future generations of mankind, so also did the atonement of Christ, for all have been saved. But election still stands. God will gather the elect unto himself. All have been saved physically, but only the elect are saved spiritually and eschatologically.

²¹ Redemption, reconciliation and propitiation are viewed as universal in scope in conformity with the three primary passages of Moderate Calvinism. The difference is that all three are actual rather than potential.

PART THREE: PRESERVING ALL TO SAVE THE MANY

CHAPTER 5: NEED FOR A COSMOLOGICAL SALVATION²³

The Bible teaches that Jesus was an active participant with the Father in the creation of the universe²⁴ and that Christ presently holds the universe together (John 1:1-5; Col. 1:16-17). It also teaches that the eschatological (end time) works of Christ will involve the entire universe, not just the realm of humanity (Rev. 21). Thus the work of Christ involves the Creation of the present universe, the sustenance of the present universe, its judgement and creation of a new universe. Salvation from beginning to end is tightly linked to the entire universe, not just to the realm of humanity, and especially not just to the realm of the spiritually redeemed of humanity.

In Colossians, Paul links all the aspects of the works of Christ (creation, sustainer, ruler, etc.) together and brings to light that his atonement had cosmic²⁵ implication.

"For all things were created in Him, the things in the heavens, and the things on the earth, the visible and the invisible; whether thrones, or lordships, or rulers, or authorities, all things have been created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and all things have subsisted in Him. And He is the Head of the body, the assembly, who is the Beginning, the First-born out of the dead, that He be preeminent in all things; because all the fullness was pleased to dwell in Him, and through Him making peace by the blood of His cross, to reconcile all things to Himself; through Him, whether the things on the earth, or the things in the heavens" (Col. 1:16-20 LITV).

Bible scholars have recognized the cosmic nature of the atonement, but seldom attempt to explain them,

Just as the material universe was in some mysterious manner affected by the fall of man (Rom. 8:19–23, R. V.), so also is it affected by the death of Jesus Christ, which is intended to neutralize the effect of sin upon the creation²⁶. There is a cosmic effect in the atonement. The Christ of Paul is larger than the second²⁷ Adam—the Head of a new humanity; He is also the center of a universe which revolves around Him, and is in some mysterious way reconciled by His death. Just how this takes place we may not be able definitely to explain."²⁸

²² A common statement of Moderate Calvinism is Christ's atonement makes "salvation provisional for all, but it is efficacious for the elect."

²³ The phrase "cosmological salvation" will be used from this point on to refer to the physical salvation of the earth.

²⁴ When speaking of the universe the Old Testament often employs the phrase "heaven and earth" (Gen. 1:1). The New Testament continues to use this phrase. At times cosmos is used to imply the same meaning.

²⁵ Though sometimes interchangeable, the term "cosmic" will be used in regards to the universe, whereas "cosmos" refers to either the earth, or the theater of mankind.

²⁶ Turn to our discussion in Rom. 5 and John 1:27 for further evaluation of Christ's "neutralizing effect of sin upon the creation".

²⁷ The New Testament never refers to Christ as the second Adam. It does call him the last Adam (1 Cor. 15:45).

²⁸ Evans, W., & Coder, S. M. (1998, c1974). *The great doctrines of the Bible*. Includes index. (Enl. ed. /). Chicago: Moody Press

It is without question that our Colossians Passage teaches that Christ's atonement had implications for the entire universe. Though this is acknowledged and discussed briefly, our primary focus is on the cosmological (this planet's) implications. The need for salvation of the physical earth is evident in the first chapters of the Bible. Genesis 1 and 2 present man as the climax and sovereign head of creation. Genesis 1:26-28 states:

“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He create him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it, have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’”

The emphasis of the image of God in man is dominion or sovereignty. Man's sovereignty over the physical creation was an image of God's sovereignty over the universe.²⁹ This sovereignty is demonstrated in Genesis 2:19 when Adam gives names to the animals of creation signifying his headship over creation.³⁰ In Genesis 1 and 2 God is depicted as creating a sinless world, with a sinless man, ruling with sinless sovereignty. To save man and not save his dominion is to take from man the very thing that makes him in the image of God. For God to preserve man's "image" he must preserve man's dominion.

In Genesis 3 sin enters the world through man. As a consequence, his world, and his ability to rule is defiled. Depravity sinks its teeth into man. God does not remove man's dominion. He does, however cause conditions that make his dominion more difficult. No longer will man be immortal, no longer will the earth submit in providing sustenance, no longer will man have ease in submitting creation to his needs and control. The curse was upon the creation and man. For man to be delivered from the curse, the creation must also be delivered.

God cursed creation because of man's rebellion towards Him. As man rebelled against God's sovereignty, so creation has rebelled against man's sovereignty. Instead of the ground cooperating in the provision of sustenance for immortality, it produces thorns and thistles (Gen. 3:18). The ground which produces what he consumes turns on him and consumes him (Gen. 3:19).³¹ Even the woman that was given as his helper in subduing creation refuses to submit towards his authority.³² She continues to be his partner to "multiply, fill and subdue the earth", but

²⁹ It was this very image that Satan attacked. Man was already "Like" God because of dominion. Yet Satan tempted with, "God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be *like God*, knowing good and evil." By taking the fruit man traded images. He shattered the mirror of dominion and held up a new mirror of knowledge of good and evil. The old mirror is not destroyed but is so marred that the image of man's crown is hidden by the cracks. Spiritual regeneration restores the imagery (2 Cor. 3:18; 1 John 3:2).

³⁰ Naming of another is a symbol of authority in the ancient near east. A Biblical example is the renaming of Daniel and his friends by the Babylonians in the first chapter of Daniel.

³¹ Man's sinless care of the garden was repaid by the earth with free and abundant produce. Sin brought debt. He is no longer viewed as a caretaker but as a taker. He pays back to the earth what he takes with his own flesh.

³² In Genesis 3:16b God tells the wife "your desire shall be for your husband, but he shall rule over you." The Hebrew construction of this passage is identical to the construction of Genesis 4:7. In the later passage Cain is warned by God that sin "desires to be over Cain, but he must rule over sin". Genesis 3:16 is a warning to the woman that she will desire dominion over her husband, but he will have dominion over her. This is consistent with the immediate context.

the pain of childbirth and loss of trust makes her less submissive to his leadership. In time, even the creatures of the earth flee from man's headship.³³

The entire cosmos is in rebellion to headship. Man is in rebellion to God and creation is in rebellion to man. Both man and his dominion need God's deliverance. Creation must be delivered if man's image of God is to be preserved. Creation is waiting for deliverance:

“For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now” (Rom. 8:18-22).

The deliverance of creation is bound up in the deliverance of man. When man is delivered creation is also delivered. The Son of God has been revealed and the provision for deliverance has been made. Though the sons of God have been spiritually and in part physically delivered, not all the sons of God have been revealed. Deliverance will be completed with the liberation of creation and the purification of man's dominion. Corruption will no longer have its grasp on man and so it will release its grasp on creation.

CHAPTER 6: SAVING MANY TO SAVE A FEW AND FEW TO SAVE THE MANY

In addition too, and of possibly stronger support for a Cosmological Salvation than the terms for salvation in the Old Testament, are the Old Testament stories of Salvation. The individual heroes in these stories are often referred to as types. But even when not a type they do lend patterns of how God accomplishes salvation. As we shall see from the following examples, the extent and implication of salvation reaches beyond the mere salvation of the elect.³⁴

I. Examples from Noah and the Flood

The judgement of man through the flood was also a judgement of the earth. The dominion of man was judged together with man. Creation was cursed because of man and was therefore judged with man. God also used the dominion of man as the instrument of judgement upon man. Man abused his dominion, so God used the dominion to judge man. There is a sense of Divine justice in the flood³⁵ account. God uses the abused to judge the abuser. Man's continual sin perverted the beauty and purity of creation. The creation responded to man's abuse by swallowing man up in judgement.

The pain and suffering of conception would not increase sexual desire toward the man, but create a sense of bitterness toward him because he caused her pain.

³³ The relationship between man and beast gradually deteriorates. Before the flood the creatures of the earth appear to respond to man's headship with a degree of submission. The effects of the flood brought fear of man by the creatures. Instead of responding favorably to man, they recognize that they are food for man and stay away in fear.

³⁴ We are restricting our examples to Genesis. To include all the great stories could take up another book.

³⁵ The flood was an act of divine cleansing and burial. The most impure of creation was washed from the earth. It was also the instrument of death. The fossil record is not a record of the evolutionary advancement of Creation. It is a record of Divine judgment. Symbols of the flood are seen in Baptism. Creation was delivered through washing and burial. Believer's baptism is both a symbolic cleansing and burial of the old creature.

As the creation was judged with man, so the creation was delivered with man. The two are inseparable because man cannot be separated from “the image of God”. God did not remove His image from man by taking away man’s dominion. He did, however reflect in the creation the marred nature of the image. The creation was radically altered to reflect the damaged image of man.³⁶ Both man and creation were delivered, though in an altered condition. It was because man was in a position of dominion that man was placed in a responsible position of deliverance of creation, thus God used man (Noah) to save creation. Salvation was physical and had cosmological significance.

New testament references to Noah and the flood compare conditions at the time of the flood with those prior to the judgement and second coming of Christ (Mt. 24:37-39; Lu. 17:26,27; 2 Pet. 2:5). Noah preserved the creation, mankind, and the future elect of mankind. He saved the world from total annihilation, carrying within himself and his family all humanity and those yet to be saved spiritually. By analogy Christ physically saved all people in order to spiritually save many people from amongst all.

II. Examples from Lot and Sodom (Gen. 18-19)

God often withholds wrath on the wicked for the sake of the Righteous. As long as there are righteous people in the world the unrighteous are protected from God’s judgement. God told Abraham that he would spare the judgement of the wicked for the sake of as few as ten righteous people in Sodom. The Lord did not find ten righteous people in Sodom. The only righteous person was Lot, Abraham’s nephew. So the Lord did not spare the city. Even though there is no indication that Lot’s family was righteous, God physically saved Lot’s wife and daughters on account of righteous Lot.³⁷

Isaiah recognizes the principle that God spares the wicked on behalf of the righteous. He states, “Unless the Lord of Host had left us a very small remnant we would have become like Sodom, we would have been made like Gomorrah” (Isa 1:9).

This principle is effective in our view of a Cosmological Salvation. Before Christ’s sacrifice there was none found righteous. The entire world was pronounced guilty. The crucifixion of Christ was the attempt of humanity to execute the Creator and was the climax of man’s wickedness. It sealed the verdict of judgement on the world. But, because God viewed it as a sacrifice by Christ it was accepted as atonement for the sins of the elect. The elect received the gift of righteousness through faith. God spared the world physical judgement for the sake of those declared righteous in Christ. In this since the entire world has been saved.

The rapture of the church can be viewed as a removal of the righteous prior to God’s final judgement of the wicked. Several New Testament references to Sodom and Gomorrah form an analogy with the rapture. In the end times the condition of the world is compared with the wicked conditions of Sodom and Gomorrah (Luke 17:28, 29). As God removed the righteous Lot from Sodom prior to judgement so he will remove the remaining righteous before Christ comes to judge the earth.

³⁶ The beauty of the present creation is a mere reflection of its previous glory. The pre-flood creation was lush with vegetation and animal life. Man’s relationship with his creation was of partnership and trust. The life span of all creatures was at least five times longer.

³⁷ It could be questioned whether God saved Lot because of Lot, or if He saved Lot because of His relationship with Abraham. Either way, our principle still applies.

III. Examples from Joseph in Egypt

Joseph was the Savior of his world. It was a physical salvation. Joseph saved His world from physical famine. It was a universal salvation (at least in the scope of his world). He delivered all of Egypt and the surrounding nations from physical starvation. God's plan included the salvation of His chosen people, the many for the sake of the few. He did it by providing salvation to all and then drawing His chosen people (Israel) into a more specific plan.

In the Old Testament it is impossible to view salvation from a mere spiritual perspective. New Testament salvation is built upon the principles and concepts of Old Testament Salvation. The ancient world viewed famine and other natural disasters as a judgement from God/gods. Joseph delivered his world from the judgement of famine. He brought his brothers to salvation through the salvation of all. Christ delivered the world from immediate destruction by turning back the physical judgement of God upon the earth. He provided salvation (spiritual and physical) for the chosen while providing physical salvation for all.

IV. Examples from Moses with Israel

God was angered to the point of wrath upon the nation of Israel for making a molten calf (Exodus 32:1-9). Through Moses' entreaty, and later the offering of a sacrifice he was able to avert God's immediate wrath (32:11-34; Psalm 106:21-23). Though Moses was able to avert God's immediate physical wrath upon the entire nation his actions would not keep the people from future judgement, for God stated, "in the day when I punish, I will punish them for their sin." (vs.34).

Jesus, like Moses, mediated for the sake of the cosmos, turning back the physical judgement of God (1 John 2:1b). The effect was that God turned back his immediate judgement. This does not negate judgement, for the unrepentant are held accountable for their sin, even if judgement is temporarily withheld.

PART FOUR: BIBLICAL EVIDENCE FOR GOD'S WRATH POSTPONED

CHAPTER 7: BIBLICAL TERMS

I. Deliverance/Salvation

a. Deliverance/Salvation in the Old Testament

Old Testament salvation is predominately physical.³⁸ Israel, or the representative king, when surrounded by external forces³⁹, pleads to another outside source for deliverance. Often the Nation/king is being confronted with a new oppressor. At other times they have been under the oppression of another and appeal for help to be delivered from an existing oppressor.

³⁸ My intent is to give a general summary. For a more in depth examination of the terms of salvation in both the Old and New Testament see *Theological dictionary of the New Testament*. Edited by Kittel, Gerhard, Geoffrey William Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-c1976.

³⁹ These are usually human forces, but can be famine or otherwise.

Often, the oppressed call upon God (or in some cases a leader or nation) to snatch them out of their present circumstances. The verb נָצַל (natzal), meaning to snatch away, conveys the idea of tearing away. It can mean to take from someone or plunder (Exodus 3:22; 12:36) or take something and give it to another (Gen. 31:9, 16). It is most often used however, to mean deliver. Often we find the phrase "to snatch out of the hand of". To "snatch out of the hand" of another is to deliver the one from the subjection of the one holding them. The first place we see this usage is in Gen. 37:21 where Reuben delivered Joseph "out of the hand" of his brothers. In Exodus 2:19 the daughters of a Median priest report to their father that an Egyptian (Moses) delivered them "from the hand of the shepherds" (see also Ex. 3:8; 18:9,10; Deut. 32:39; Joshua 9:26; 22:31; Judges 8:34; 9:17 etc.).

In most cases it is God who snatches the oppressed out of the hand of the oppressor. He either does it directly (Ex. 18:8-10; Deut. 23:14) or, indirectly through the impowerment of a human deliverer (Judges 18:28; 1 Sam. 30:8). On some occasions, it is God whom the people must be delivered from. In Joshua 22:31 we read, "And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest said to the sons of Reuben and to the sons of Gad and to the sons of Manasseh, 'Today we know that the LORD is in our midst, because you have not committed this unfaithful act against the LORD; now you have delivered the sons of Israel from the hand of the LORD.'" The actions of Phinehas satisfied God and brought a halt of God's wrath upon the people, thus Phinehas delivered the people from "the hand of the Lord." Job also states, "According to Your knowledge I am indeed not guilty, Yet there is no deliverance from Your hand." (Job 10:7). And the prophet Hosea records, "And then I will uncover her (Israel's) lewdness In the sight of her lovers, And no one will deliver her out of My hand" (Hos. 2:10, see also 5:14). In each of these passages God is the one inflicting wrath. Those in the path of His wrath need a deliverer to snatch them out of His hand.

At other times (sometimes the same context) the oppressed calls upon deliverer to act as a warrior to fight against an oppressor. Here, the intent is more than simply to snatch them out of their hands of the oppressor. The Savior/Deliverer will yield a sword and fight for the oppressed. The word יָשָׁא (yasha) and its derivatives is used 353 times in the Old Testament and most often has a warrior/savior implied in the context. It is found in four fifths of the Old Testament books and thus should be considered a major theme. The root meaning of יָשָׁא is to "make wide" or "make sufficient". The Savior/Deliver provides freedom for the oppressed and allows for their expansion. Until the exile of Israel this term is always used for physical salvation from an oppressor (Ex. 14:30; Num 10:9; Duet. 20:4; 22:27; 33:29; Josh. 10:6; Judges 3:9; Psalm 3:7; etc.). Either God acts as the warrior/savior or He provides someone who acts as such.

With the exception of two verses in Ezekial (36:29; 37:23)⁴⁰ the predominant theme in Old Testament theology regarding salvation is physical. God either acts as a warrior/savior, fighting for

⁴⁰ The only real exception to the above understanding of יָשָׁא is found in Ezekial. Israel has been defeated by Assyria, and Judea has been taken into Babylon in exile. The oppression is complete. The only hope is for Israel to return to the homeland. No longer is the focus for God to deliver them from their oppressors. Now, the issue is why God hasn't responded previously to their request for physical deliverance. Ezekial's response is that the real enemy should not be considered external forces. The real enemy is within the individuals and the community. Ezekial uses the verb יָשָׁא just two times, and these toward the end of his prophecy to Judea, "Moreover, I will save you from all your uncleanness; and I will call for the grain and multiply it, and I will not bring a famine on you" (Ezek 36:29), and again, "They will no longer defile themselves with their idols, or with their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions, but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. And they will be My people, and I will be their God" (Ezek. 37:23). In these passages God is not viewed as a

oppressed Israel (and/or the king) or he simply snatches them out of the hand of the oppressor. Spiritual salvation is present in the Old Testament, but it doesn't supplant the concept of physical salvation. Physical salvation is still very much a part of Old Testament theology even in post-exilic writings and in the description of the regathering of Israel (Zephaniah 3:17, 19; Zechariah 8:7, 13; 9:9,16; 10:6; 12:7).

Just as spiritual salvation is a part of Old Testament theology, physical salvation should not be omitted from New Testament theology. The Old Testament dispensation was very much alive during the life, and at the death of Christ. It is true that Christ died for individual "sin/s", but it is also true that as Savior He stood between man and one with the power and a reason to inflict wrath that was bigger than man. Christ interceded for the physical salvation of the world.

The primary concentration of salvation in the OT was deliverance from physical wrath and oppression. Physical salvation also has its place in the New Testament. Christ died for "all" physically and he died for the "elect" both physically and spiritually. But even this spiritual salvation has future physical ramifications, in that the elect will be exempt from the physical wrath of God's judgement. Thus, God's wrath was postponed, but not canceled.

b. Deliverance/Salvation in the New Testament

"Saved" from what? It's a simple enough question. After all, isn't salvation the fundamental issue of the "Good News" of Jesus Christ? Thirty years ago Linda (my wife) and I were visiting a small church in South Florida. I'd recently read the Gospel of John and responded by believing in Jesus Christ. I understood only some of the basics of Christianity, and certainly hadn't become familiar with church language. I simply believed that this Jesus was the Creator, the Son of God, and that he was who the Gospel of John claimed him to be.

Now back to the little church. After the service that morning one of the elders came to us, and with all good intent asked me, "are you saved?" The look on my face must have revealed that I was puzzled. I asked him, "saved from what?" He hesitantly responded, "saved from your sins?" Linda understood him and quickly explained to him that I was a recent convert. I did understand that I was forgiving for my sins, but I had difficulty understanding what he meant by saved from sin.

More than thirty years have passed. I've learned the evangelical and church vocabulary. After all, I've attended a respected evangelical seminary, been a pastor in three churches. I've led hundreds of people to Christ through the Church and through my work with the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. For twenty years I've been studying the subject that I'm writing about today. And now, thirty years later, I find myself returning to that one fundamental question, "Saved from what?"

We observed in the previous section that the people in the Old Testament were saved from famine, natural catastrophes, oppression from enemies, war, and/or from God's wrath. But, what is the New Testament believer saved from?

We know that Jesus healed the sick, forgave sin, raised the dead and preached the Good News of the Kingdom, but what is the believer saved from? The church often preaches about salvation from the bondage of sin, or salvation from the law, or salvation from sickness and

warrior/savior against a human oppressor. He is now viewed as a warrior/savior, yielding His sword against the sin that caused Him to reject their appeals against alien oppressors.

oppression, spiritual salvation, psychological salvation, etc. We are also taught that believers are saved "for" or "unto" good works or eternal life. Much of this however, seems to march around the perimeters of the central issue. What really are we saved from?

In studying the New Testament I was amazed at the proximity of the idea of judgement and/or God's wrath with salvation. We have been saved, are being saved and will be saved from the wrath of God. The subject matter has not significantly changed from that of the Old Testament. There are immediate implications for the believer (indwelling of the Spirit, ability to overcome temptation, etc.) but the salvation is "from" the wrath of God. Some may say we are saved from sin, but isn't that another way of saying we are saved from the effects or consequences of sin, which is the wrath of God?

The concept of the wrath of God is not popular among the modern prophets of love, who rationalize, "if God is love how could He condemn anyone?" They are incapable of understanding or acknowledging God's love being consistent with His attributes of justice and righteousness. So, ignoring Scripture they redefine the fundamental principles of salvation, leaving virtually nothing to be saved from, or at least nothing for which one can't save oneself. But, to be saved for or unto something, one must be first saved from something. That something is the wrath of God.

The best way to illustrate this is to simply let the New Testament speak for itself. The following New Testament Scriptures demonstrate the link of God's wrath to salvation:

Mat 3:7 - But when he (John the Baptist) saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?"

Luke 21:23 - (Jesus speaking of the end times) "Woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days; for there will be great distress upon the land and wrath to this people;

John 3:36 - "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

Romans 1:18 - (Paul speaking of God's wrath presently at work in those that chose to ignore God's general revelation) For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,

Romans 2:5 - But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,

Romans 2:8 - but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation.

Romans 5:9 - Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.

Romans 9:22 - What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?

Romans 12:19 - Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says the Lord.

Ephesians 5:6 - Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience.

Colossians 3:6 - For it is because of these things that the wrath of God will come upon the sons of disobedience,

1 Thessalonians 1:10 - and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who rescues us from the wrath to come.

1 Thessalonians 2:16 - hindering us from speaking to the Gentiles so that they may be saved; with the result that they always fill up the measure of their sins. But wrath has come upon them to the utmost.

1 Thessalonians 5:9 - For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,

Hebrews 3:11 - AS I SWORE IN MY WRATH, "THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST."

Revelation 6:16 - and they *said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb;

Revelation 6:17 - for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"

Revelation 11:18 - "And the nations were enraged, and Your wrath came, and the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to reward Your bond-servants the prophets and the saints and those who fear Your name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth."

Revelation 12:12 - "For this reason, rejoice, O heavens and you who dwell in them. Woe to the earth and the sea, because the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, knowing that he has only a short time."

Revelation 14:10 - he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.

Revelation 14:19 - So the angel swung his sickle to the earth and gathered the clusters from the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of the wrath of God.

Revelation 15:1 - Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels who had seven plagues, which are the last, because in them the wrath of God is finished.

Revelation 15:7 - Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of the wrath of God, who lives forever and ever.

Revelation 16:1 - Then I heard a loud voice from the temple, saying to the seven angels, "Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of the wrath of God."

Revelation 16:19 - The great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell.

Babylon the great was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath.

Revelation 19:15 - From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.

Universalists claim that "everyone will be saved". They are saved from what, certainly not the wrath of God. God will demand an accounting for every human being that has ever lived. They that are alive at the end of this age will experience the Day of the Lord spoken of by the Old Testament prophets and confirmed by Jesus (Matt. 24), John (Revelation), Peter (2 Peter 1:1-13) and Paul (2 Thessalonians 2). Those that died prior to the Day of the Lord will join these in the day of judgement. John says,

"Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them

according to their deeds. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire" Revelation 20:11-15.

The New Testament is not divorced of Old Testament principles. Salvation starts with an offer to the Jews in a Jewish context. Luke, the only Gentile author in the New Testament quotes the Father of John the Baptist, who is looking for the deliverance of Israel,

And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited us and accomplished redemption for His people, And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of David His servant-- As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from of old-- Salvation FROM OUR ENEMIES, And FROM THE HAND OF ALL WHO HATE US; To show mercy toward our fathers, And to remember His holy covenant, The oath which He swore to Abraham our father, To grant us that we, being rescued from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear, In holiness and righteousness before Him all our days. "And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Most High; For you will go on BEFORE THE LORD TO PREPARE HIS WAYS; To give to His people the knowledge of salvation By the forgiveness of their sins, Because of the tender mercy of our God, With which the Sunrise from on high will visit us, TO SHINE UPON THOSE WHO SIT IN DARKNESS AND THE SHADOW OF DEATH, To guide our feet into the way of peace." [Luke 1:67-80a]

Zacharias understood that salvation for Israel meant judgement of the Nations that persecuted and hated them. If we examine the history of Israel in relationship to the surrounding nations we understand that none are excluded from Zacharias' description. Zacharias views John preparing the way for a Savior that will yield the sword of judgement on the nations and free Israel from these oppressors.

Israel's national rejection of Messiah placed them in a position with the rest of the nations. They entered into judgement with them, and so, all the nations were guilty before God. The judgement upon the nations was now the judgement upon the world.

The thesis of "God's wrath postponed" is that the physical world was spared from the wrath of God at the time of the Cross. Christ redeemed the entire world, including every human, from immediate physical judgement. It is within this context that we explain many of the universal passages in the New Testament.⁴¹ All have literally been saved.

Even after Christ covered (kaphor) the nation and the world from the physical wrath of God the offer of salvation went out to Israel. The early church was made of Jewish believers delivering their message to the Jews and proclaiming repentance and salvation to the nation. It wasn't until it was clear that the nation rejected their Messiah that the Good News proceeded to the Gentiles. Most of the apostles continued to deliver their message to the Jews. Paul calls these the apostles to the Jews and sees his calling to the Gentiles. It was thus the rejection by the Jews that brought salvation to the nations, not just in a spiritual sense, but also in accordance with our thesis.

⁴¹ All have literally been saved. Universalists are correct in acknowledging an "actual" salvation of man. They wrong however, to place this actual salvation in the future and say that "all" will be saved. We agree with the universalist that salvation is actual for all, but we put it in the past. Christ died for all, in that he saved them from God's wrath at the time of the Cross. This salvation is no guarantee of salvation from God's wrath in the future.

Thus, the Gentiles are indebted to Israel as well as Christ. Paul states, "For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery--so that you will not be wise in your own estimation--that a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, 'THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB.' 'THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS.'" (Romans 11:25-27)

It is at the point where the gospel appeals less to the Gentiles and more to the Jews that we can expect the Day of the Lord to be near. Not that Jews have ever been excluded from the gospel, there has always been a remnant. But, when the nations reject Him and the Jews receive him, God's wrath on the nations will follow. Zechariah states,

"I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn. (Zechariah 12:10)

And when the repentance is complete,

Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle. In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south. You will flee by the valley of My mountains, for the valley of the mountains will reach to Azel; yes, you will flee just as you fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD, my God, will come, and all the holy ones with Him! In that day there will be no light; the luminaries will dwindle. For it will be a unique day which is known to the LORD, neither day nor night, but it will come about that at evening time there will be light. And in that day living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea; it will be in summer as well as in winter. And the LORD will be king over all the earth; in that day the LORD will be the only one, and His name the only one. (Zechariah 14:3-9)

It would be an error to refer to the Church age as a parenthesis set between Jewish kingdoms. Although it is the age of the Gentiles, it doesn't preclude the Jews. It is all one Kingdom, but in different stages. The Church age is a partial fulfillment to Abraham that he would be a blessing to many nations. When the nation of Israel is established a new stage will emerge, but it will all be part of God's Kingdom.

Salvation is from the wrath of God. The Messiah is the Savior/Deliverer. Only Christ can save. He provided salvation for all by turning back God's wrath at the Cross. However, ever man will be held accountable for his sins unless he turns to Messiah for forgiveness of those sins. Next time He comes it will be with a sword in hand. He has baptized believers with the Holy Spirit. He will baptize the unbelieving world with fire.

II. Atonement

a. Kaphar (כַּפַּר) as a covering in the Old Testament

We mentioned earlier that the term atonement encompass all that Christ accomplished on the cross at Calvary: reconciliation, redemption, propitiation, deliverance, salvation, justification and forgiveness. In Theology it is sometimes defined as At-One-Ment; the idea that man and God are restored back to an original relationship of oneness that was lost when Adam sinned.

There are many theories of the Atonement. These theories attempt to define how and what Christ accomplished either through his life, by his death, or through his resurrection. They sometimes focus on the extent of the atonement and ask the question “For whom did Christ die?” This is the very issue we are attempting to answer here.

Yet, the term “atonement” does not occur in the Scripture. Does that mean it is an inadequate theological term? No, “trinity” and “rapture” are not in the New Testament either, but the theology of the trinity and the rapture are present.

To get a better understanding of Atonement we must turn to the Old Testament. The word sometimes translated into English “atonement” is the Hebrew word “ka-phar” (כַּפַּר). Its oldest literal meaning is best translated into English “cover over”. It is used for the first time in Genesis 6:14. God tells Noah, “Make an ark of cyprus timbers for yourself. You shall make rooms in the ark; and you shall cover it with pitch inside and out.” Both “cover” and “pitch” have the same root – “ka-phar”.

The second and final time “ka-phar” is used in Genesis Jacob is about to meet his brother Esau after many years of separation. Jacob is afraid that Esau still holds bitterness towards him and sends a gift hoping to pacify Esau’s anger before they meet. Jacob says to his servant, “And you shall also say, Behold, your servant Jacob *is* behind us. For he said, I will cover his face by the present, the one going before my face, and afterward I will see his face; perhaps he will lift up my face” (Gen 32:20 LITV). The King James and New American Standard (along with other translations) translate “ka-phar” as “appease” to capture the effect Jacob desired by covering Esau with a gift.

There is only one other time in Scripture that both the subject and object of ka-phar are men. The author of Proverbs 16:14 states, “A king’s fury *is* as messengers of death, but a wise man will cover it” (Pro 16:14 LITV). Again, the KJV and NAS use “appease” in the place of “cover” to capture the effect of the covering. It appears that the intent of “covering over” is to “appease or pacify” the anger of the one being covered in these passages. The actual “cover” in this passage does not appear to be a gift (as in Gen 32:20) but rather words of wisdom (see verse 13). The thing being covered is not the king but the anger of the king.

To understand ka-phar’s meaning it is important to explain what it does not mean. It does not mean “atonement”. According to Webster English Dictionary atonement is defined as,

1. Agreement; concord; reconciliation, after enmity or controversy.
2. Expiation; satisfaction or reparation made by giving an equivalent for an injury, or by doing or suffering that which is received in satisfaction for an offense or injury; with for.
3. In theology, the expiation of sin made by the obedience and personal sufferings of Christ.

Reconciliation is often the effect of ka-phar (Eze 43:20; 45:15,17,20; Dan. 9:24; Lev. 6:30; 8:15; 16:20) and is thus translated at times, but it is not the meaning of ka-phar. Neither are expiation or propitiation proper definitions for ka-phar. Again, these are sometimes the effects, but never the intended meaning. Also, as stated earlier the theological use of “Atonement” has become pregnant with meaning that extends beyond Webster’s definition. In the New Testament it encompasses all that Jesus accomplished on the cross. Thus “atonement” is misleading as a translation for ka-phar.

Most translations, including the KJV and NAS translate ka-phar with other words that communicate the contextual effect instead of the literal meaning of ka-phar. These include merciful (Deut. 21:8; 32:43), appease or pacify (Gen. 32:20; Prov. 16:14), forgive (Deut. 21:8; Jer. 18:23), purge or clean (Num. 35:33; 1 Sam. 3:14; Psalm 79:9; Isa. 6:7; 22:14; 27:9; Eze. 32:43; 43:26). All of these words describe the result of or desired effect by the subject of ka-phar, but none of these correctly give the meaning of ka-phar. Though much is lost in translation the best English equivalent to ka-phar is “cover over”. This may at times seem forced or awkward, but it still comes closer to conveying the literal meaning of ka-phar than does the alternatives.

Why is a covering made? In most cases the intent of the covering is to appease, pacify, or avert anger. Man either attempts to appease, pacify or avert the anger of another man (Gen. 32:30; Prov. 16:14) or God. When God’s anger is involved an attempt to cover sometimes occurs when God’s wrath is already in process (Ex. 16:41-46; 32:30; Num 16:46; 2 Sam. 21:3). In some instances God provides the cover that appeases, pacifies, or averts his own anger (Deut 21:8; 32:43; Psalm 78:38). In these instances it is clear that the cover is a protection from His judgement. Isaiah records,

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk in the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame kindle on you. For I am Jehovah your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I gave Egypt for your atonement (kaphor); Ethiopia and Seba instead of you. Since you were precious in My eyes, you are honored, and I love you; and I give men instead of you; and peoples instead of your soul. (Isa 43:2-4 LITV)

Egypt is the “cover” that receives God’s wrath in the place of Israel. Along the same line the Psalmist states, “But He, being compassionate, covered over iniquity, and did not destroy; and often He turned away His anger, and did not arouse all His wrath.” (Psalm 78:38). The cover is viewed here, not as something to hide iniquity, but to form a shield that averts God’s wrath. Thus, in every situation where ka-phor is used it is meant cover over that which is disgusting to God and thus avert His wrath.

What was being covered? When a man is the subject and another man is the object (Gen.32:30; Prov. 16:14) the subject attempts to cover either the other man or his anger. When God is involved in the covering an attempt is never made to cover God or His anger, for God and/or anything regarding Him can not be the object of the covering. Instead, the object of the covering is the offense (sin, inequity, impurity) that caused God to be angered, the person/s that were responsible for the offense (Deut 32:43; Num 25:13; Ezek. 16:63), or things (house, land, altar, etc.) defiled by the offense. The cover is not an attempt to hide sin and inequity from God. It is a confession of the sin and acknowledgement that the sin or impurity is offensive to God. Unless God accepts the cover (He is never obligated) the person/s responsible for the offense and everything defiled by the offense are condemned and marked by the offense for judgement.

What was the purpose of the covering? The immediate and primary purpose of ka-phar was to avert, pacify or appease God's anger. Ka-phar covered the iniquity, impurity or people and things defiled and thus averted, pacified or appeased God's purifying wrath. In some cases the covering acted as an immediate shield from God's anger upon the entire covenant community. In other cases the covering was accepted as a means of washing away the iniquities that brought about God's anger. This is especially true of ritualistic covering (Leviticus). On the Day of Atonement (Yom Ka-phar) the priest offered a sacrifice that washed the sins of the whole community and thus acted as a covering for the community. Each person also was responsible to bring a sacrifice to the priest who then offered upon the alter for the person's sins. Sin was viewed as defilement and was figuratively looked upon as filth or uncleanness by God. God would not associate Himself with physical or moral uncleanness. He would not have fellowship with people defiled by any form of uncleanness. Because it was God that was repulsed by the unclean it was God that defined unclean to those He chose to have a relationship. God also defined how they could present themselves as clean so he could have an association with them. As a day-by-day, week-by-week ritual ka-phar was a preventative covering that cleansed the sinner of moral defilement, reminded him of the purity and standards of God, kept him in fellowship with God, thus keeping God's wrath at a distance.

What was used as an acceptable cover? Men accept gifts (Gen. 32:20), words of wisdom (Prov. 16:14), money (2 Sam. 21:4), or justice (2 Sam 21:1-14). These are accepted as payments to placate the wrath of men. God's usual requirement should not be viewed as a means to placate, but as a means of substitution for. Thus most coverings require a "life for life". The blood sacrifice demonstrates the seriousness of the offense. Divine justice requires the verdict of death be carried out for the offense. "For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar, to atone (kaphor) for your souls; for it is the blood which makes atonement for the soul" (Lev. 17:11 LITV). This was the means of receiving the covering in ritual ceremony and in some circumstances by an action of one for the sake of the community,

"And Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw. And he rose from amidst the congregation and took a javelin in his hand, and went in after the man of Israel, into the tent room. And he pierced both of them through, the man of Israel and the woman, through her belly. So the plague was stayed from the sons of Israel. And those that died by the plague were twenty four thousand. And Jehovah spoke to Moses, saying, Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, has turned My wrath away from the sons of Israel while he was zealous for My sake among them, so that I did not consume the sons of Israel in My jealousy" (Num 25:7-11 LITV).

There were circumstances that allowed payment other than blood as substantial to cover the people and avert God's wrath (Ex. 30:12; Num. 31:50). These are redemptive, a sacrificial payment.

There are they that object to an understanding of a God who responds to the sinner with anger and wrath. But the Old Testament is plentiful with warnings to those that sin against Him that He will visit them with His anger (Ex. 22:22-24; 32:7-9; Num. 11:31-34; 16:41-46; De. 6:14-

15; Jr. 6:10-15; Ezek. 7:3, 8-9; 8:17-18; Zeph. 1:17-18). If this weren't so a covering (Kaphor) would not be necessary.⁴²

Much more could be said and should be said about the nature of Kaphor. Our point is to apply it to the work of Christ. Kaphor is a covering that shields the offender from the one offended. It provides physical covering and protection. It is appropriated temporarily to the entire community, even to those that are undeserving of the covering. The sacrifice is viewed as a payment for the protective covering that holds back the physical wrath of God. It effects not only the community but the land occupied by the community.

Christ's death was a Kaphor for the cosmos. He was the sacrificial lamb provided as a payment for the entire community of humanity and humanity's dominion, acting as a Passover, diverting God's wrath. Thus, in a physical sense, all have been saved. Is everyone covered by Christ's death? Yes, in the sense that everyone is alive because Christ's death delivered them from the wrath of God. Are all covered in the future tense? No, everyone that acknowledges that Christ died for them will in effect put on the covering of the righteousness of Christ, thus delivering them from future wrath. Everyone that rejects Christ will be judged by Christ at His second coming.

b. Propitiation in the New Testament

Propitiation (ἱλαστέριον Romans 3:25, ἱλασμος 1 John 2:2 & 4:10, ἱλασκομια Heb. 2:17 is "the means of turning away wrath"⁴³ and captures in the New Testament what ka-phar does in the Old. Christ was the offering that turned away the wrath of God. He turned away the immediate wrath of God at the time of the cross, saving all humanity and humanity's dominion from physical annihilation. In this sense He is the Savior of the world.

This is how I John 2:1b-2 can best be understood, " ... And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world." As an advocate Jesus stands between the world and God petitioning God on the behalf of His people. He is like Abraham making an appeal for Lot, or Moses making His appeal for the nation of Israel. But whereas Abraham and Moses make an appeal, Jesus carries His actions a step farther.

Jesus Christ is the offering that turns away the wrath of God for the sins of believers. He is also the offering that turns away the wrath of God for the sins of the whole world (including non-believers). Jesus offering turned away the actual physical wrath of God upon the physical earth and every physical creature on it at the time of the cross. His sacrifice saved the entire world from God's wrath.

John writes this in the present tense, "He Himself is the propitiation for our sins". Though his sacrifice is final the effects of His sacrifice is continuous. Even as Christ presently acts as an

⁴² The idea of the covering is foreshadowed in the drama of man's original sin. Even though the term ka-phor is not used the concept of the covering is present. Adam and Eve's immediate response after taking and eating the forbidden fruit is the recognition of their nakedness. Their response was to cover themselves (Gen. 3:7). In addition to covering themselves, the couple hid from God. Prior to this time they had not been afraid of God. Their transgression created guilt moving them away from God and fear toward Him. We find later in the story that their attempt to cover themselves was inadequate. This is predictive of all man's future attempts towards atonement. God provided them with the proper covering to protect them from the effects of the curse (Gen. 3:21). Clothing is a constant reminder to God, creation and mankind of the link between the sin of Adam and humanity.

⁴³ I've intentionally chosen propitiation over expiation. For a clarification on the distinctions see Leon Morris, The Atonement, Inter-varsity Press, 1983, pp. 151-176

advocate for his people his sacrifice continues to avert God's wrath upon this present evil world. The world is spared because believers are spared. As long as believers are in the world, God holds back His judgement on the non-believing world as well.⁴⁴

That the wrath of God should be understood by the word propitiation⁴⁵ is clear from the context of Romans 3:25. Paul's argument in chapters 1-3 is centered in revelation of God's wrath. Both the Gentiles (1:18-31; 2:5) and the Jews (3:1-20) are declared as accountable to God and worthy of His wrath. In verse 25 the word translated "propitiation" (NAS, KJV) is the only possible means of satisfying the justice of God. God must display his wrath. Commentators that recognize wrath as central to the meaning of this word usually interpret it "to avert wrath".⁴⁶ But Jesus is doing more than simply averting the wrath of God. Rather, he is the recipient of God's wrath. It is only by receiving the wrath of the Father that God's justice can be satisfied. Jesus doesn't simply avert the wrath, but it is done by averting it upon himself. This is consistent with Isaiah's portrayal of the Suffering Messiah (Isaiah 53). For he says of Him, "yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed (vs. 4-5)". Later he says, "But the Lord was pleased to crush Him, putting Him to grief (vs. 10)".

The crucifixion was God's public display of His wrath averted from the deserved recipients, humanity, to the new representative and federal head of humanity, namely Jesus. God's righteousness obligated Him as the judge of the universe to judge the sins of humanity publicly in the courtroom of the universe. But where there was the righteousness of God there was also the forbearance of God. In His forbearance He held back His judgement on the world (passed over) for the sins that were formerly committed. Jesus faithfully fulfilled his voluntary objective and through faith⁴⁷ to the Father and the program set out before Him went to the cross and received the judgement of God for the sin's of the world upon Himself. His faith gave God the opportunity to display His righteousness and yet spare the world from His immediate physical wrath. We are told that He did this "that He might be just and the justifier of the one who is of the faith of Jesus." Thus, God demonstrated His justice by executing judgement for sin and justified the elect by reckoning the faith of Jesus to their account. They who are outside of the household of faith are benefactors of Christ's faithfulness because the program that justified the elect also averted the physical wrath of God from creation. They are indebted to Jesus for their present physical existence.

III. Redemption

Did the death of Christ pay a price to redeem all, or was it simply for some? Was it sufficient for all, but efficient for the elect only? If his death paid a price for some, then why does the Scripture's say it was for all? But if it was for all, why does it not appear that all have been

⁴⁴ This principle was discussed earlier under the heading of Lot.

⁴⁵ C. H. Dodd

⁴⁶ Morris, p

⁴⁷ Paul often uses the phrase "faith of Jesus" which is translated in most English versions "faith in Jesus". The word for faith used in these verses πιστις, can not be distinguished from "faithfulness". Faith and faithfulness are inseparable. Jesus faith in the Father compelled Him to act faithfully to the program of the Father. Believers are not justified because of their faith in Jesus, but because faithfulness Jesus has been imputed to them. The focus is not on man's faith in Jesus but on Jesus' faithfulness to the Father.

redeemed? "For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all, the testimony given at the proper time" (1Ti 2:5-6). Christ, who is in essence God, is also in essence human, stands as an intermediary between God and humanity. His ransom was not paid just for some, or even for the many, it was paid for humanity. It was paid for all? It was not paid in a manner whereby "all" are potentially saved.⁴⁸ In some sense "all" have been redeemed and have thus been saved. "All" have not been redeemed in the sense that "all" will be saved from ultimate judgement. "All" humanity has been redeemed in the sense that Christ's death paid a price to the Father that stopped the immediate execution of God's judgement upon Creation at the time of the cross. Humanity and the portion of Creation under human headship received the verdict of condemnation. Christ's sacrifice paid the price that stopped the immediate judgement for that condemnation. Thus humanity and humanities' dominion were spared the immediate wrath of God. The world has thus been redeemed (purchased) by the blood of the Lamb.

Does this mean that "all" humanity will be spared God's wrath, that judgement will be withheld indefinitely? No. Peter states, "But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves" (2Pe 2:1). These false teachers have been redeemed, saved from God's wrath at the time of Christ's sacrifice, yet they will not be saved at the time when judgement will be executed. These men deny the very one that rescued them from God's wrath. By denying their redeemer, they increase their guilt. The intensity of their heresy is amplified by the magnitude of Christ's actions on their account.

IV. Reconciliation

In the same manner in which propitiation and redemption apply to all, so does reconciliation. Reconciliation refers to parties that were at one time aligned, then alienated, being brought back together. In the case of humanities relationship to God, man's (Adam)⁴⁹ sin brought alienation between man and God. It was not God that needed to be reconciled to man, but man that needed to be reconciled to God. Man had alienated himself from God. Though man was alienated from God when Messiah came into the world, the execution of Messiah intensified the alienation, not just causing separation from God, but bringing about immediate condemnation by God. Alienation and condemnation was complete at the Cross.

Christ's execution sealed the verdict of condemnation, but also provided propitiation and paid a ransom (redemption) freeing humanity from immediate judgement. The effect was that the creation was reconciled to God.

The question of the believer's reconciliation to God is not an issue here. Most of the passages of the New Testament that speak of reconciliation refer to the unique relationship that believers have with God through Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:16; Romans 5:6-11). This unique relationship includes the sealing and presence of the Holy Spirit abiding within the believer, and the promise to the believer that freedom from condemnation and judgement are applicable to the future. Believers are a completed sphere (in Christ) within the sphere of a physically and partially reconciled world.

⁴⁸ This is the view of unlimited atonement. All humanity has been potentially saved, but that only the elect appropriate salvation, and are thus actually saved.

⁴⁹ In the Hebrew text the Adam means Man. As the first man, Adam is the representation of man.

In Colossians Paul states,

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven" (Col. 1:15-20).

Several points need to be brought out about this magnificent passage that are important to our thesis. First, reconciliation encompasses "all thing", not simply 'all believers'. It encompasses all "things on earth and things in heaven." Thus, reconciliation is not restricted to the domain of mankind. The passage does not say, 'all people' or 'all beings', but rather, 'all things'. The entire universe had been disjointed. The entire universe was without peace. Christ's sacrifice covered over the offense that resulted in the alienation and allowed for creation to be reconciled to the Father.

If the creation was in a state of condemnation and judgement at the execution of Christ, and Christ received the wrath of that judgement upon himself, then his sacrifice deflected the wrath of God establishing a physical reconciliation of the Creation. The nature of the reconciliation of the universe, including its principalities and powers is outside of the scope of this book. It is surmised however, that Christ, as Creator and Sustainer of the Universe is in some sense also the Savior of this Universe. The cosmos is not the only thing brought back into reconciliation with God, the entire universe is reconciled to God through the power of the Cross.

It is important to emphasize that the reconciliation of "all" creation is partial in nature. All humanity, as a part of creation, has received physical reconciliation. But humanity can receive complete reconciliation, that is, a personal relationship with the Father and freedom from final judgement by acknowledging the finished work of Christ. Humanity is potentially capable of appropriating what the fallen angels cannot, the total withdrawal of condemnation and fellowship with God through Jesus Christ.

Another important passage bringing out the universal nature of reconciliation is 1 Corinthians 1:15-20:

For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer. Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an

appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2Co 5:14-21)

"One died for all". Christ died for "all", not some or many, but all⁵⁰. It is understood that "all" means all humanity. Not only did Christ die for all, but "all" for whom he died are now considered dead, "therefore all died". The Father looks down upon the creation as if judgement had been applied to creation. Christ received the judgement of death upon himself, now the Father sees the judgement as having been applied to creation, thus all are dead. Paul speaks of this declaration of death often, especially of those who have come to Christ and are thus brought to life (Eph. 2:1-5; 5:14). Again, Paul states, "And he died for all" to emphasize the universal nature of Christ's death.

Within the sphere of the dead humanity, are those that acknowledge Christ's death and resurrection. These are declared "they that live". They live because they acknowledge Christ, are viewed as buried with Christ in his death, and are resurrected with Christ. Among the world of the dead walk the living. They died with the world when Christ took the wrath of God upon himself. They came to life with Christ when they acknowledged him as first born from the dead. They are alive because they live in Christ. They acknowledge that Christ paid a debt for them, therefore they ought to live in a manner that acknowledges that debt.

After discussing the believer as a new creature in Christ, he returns to the theme of reconciliation, "Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation." Much could be said about the believer's ministry of reconciliation, but our focus is on the universal nature of reconciliation. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them". It's not that humanity is without guilt, or that God's wrath is not deserved, but because Christ receive the wrath for them, wrath is withheld, thus God withholds what humanity deserves. Though the wrath has been withheld because of Christ's intervention, humans must acknowledge Christ's works to cancel out future wrath. This is why Paul, even though he says the world is reconciled, also implores humans "we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God".

The world has been literally reconciled to God through Christ. By withholding wrath, God has allowed the world to continue its existence, giving an opportunity to acknowledge the redemption Christ has provided and enter into a relationship with Him. It is one thing to have judgement for the cause of alienation deflected; it is another to reject the one that paid the price that removed the alienation. By not acknowledging the redeemer, the rejection becomes the basis for future judgement. Though the wrath has been withheld, the guilty will not go unpunished.

V. Cosmos

CHAPTER 8: EXAMINATION OF UNIVERSAL PASSAGES

Our thesis, "God's wrath postponed," simplifies the interpretation of the universal passages in the New Testament. Christ actually died for all, for all have been saved. Christ's death put a

⁵⁰ In many passages Paul uses "all" to mean "Jew and Gentile". The context is usually clear when Paul means all in this manner. The context doesn't seem to warrant such an understanding in this text.

brake on the wrath of God and saved the entire cosmos from His immediate judgement. Thus, Christ is the Savior of all people, because all have been saved. Some of the following passages have been discussed earlier. The purpose of this section is to treat each passage independently and thoroughly.

I. Colossians 1:19, 20

For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven. (Col. 1:19, 20)

The significance of Col. 1:19-20 is the cosmic (universe, not just earth or man) implications of the atonement. Christ is not simply the creator and sustainer of Mankind, He is the creator of the universe. His concerns are for man, but not just man. Christ was sent, not just to reconcile man to God, but to reconcile the cosmic order to God.

In comparison, Noah's obedience to God saved not just mankind, but saved the earth as well. Noah's obedience was unable to stop the wrath of God upon creation, but it was able to spare creation the total effects of that wrath. The result was that creation was spared total eradication, and life, though altered, was saved and once again began to thrive. If the salvation accomplished by Noah extended beyond mankind, how much more would it be expected that the salvation by Christ extend to the creation, or the cosmos.

It was not just mankind that was thrown out of order through rebellion toward God in the early stages of Creation. The entire universe required redemption, propitiation and reconciliation. Col. 1:20 is the climax of the depiction of Christ as, not just the creator (vs. 16), sustainer (vs. 17) and authority (vs. 18) of all things, but also the reconciler of all things. His obedience did not stop the wrath of God, but deflected that wrath onto Himself, and in so receiving the wrath, spared the universe (including the earth and man) the wrath its disobedience deserved. Thus, "through him (Christ) to reconcile all things to himself by making peace through the blood of the cross - through him, whether things on earth or things in heaven."

Paul's final phrase, "whether things on earth or things in heaven," leaves no choice but to interpret "all things" without exception. A cosmic reconciliation resulting in peace has occurred as a result of Christ's actions on the cross.

One may ask, "but doesn't the war still go on?" In a sense, yes! Christ's obedience deflected God's judgement away from the cosmos. It also altered God's relationship to the cosmos. By receiving the judgement of the cosmos the cosmos is now indebted to Christ and all future judgement of the debtor is in the hands of the one who paid the debt. Thus, future judgement is dependent upon one's relationship to the Son who paid the debt.

This is why Paul can shift his emphasis from the generalized universal reconciliation in Col. 1:20 to a more specific reconciliation of believers in Col. 1:21-23. These believers have received the common grace of God's universal withdrawal of judgement at the time of the cross, but by acknowledging Christ have moved into a more specific relationship with him. This relationship puts the believer in good standing before the living God who blesses them in this life and the life to come, canceling out all future judgement.

II. I Timothy 4:9, 10

"This is why we work hard and struggle, because we have set our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of believers."

Paul's emphasis is on his God ordained priorities. His efforts are not on bodily development, which has some value, but on godliness which is infinitely more valuable (vs. 8) in the present life and the life to come.

Godliness is viewed as having present benefits and benefits in the life to come. Because God rewards now as well as in the future, Paul refers to Him as the "living God". God is not viewed just in His transcendence as "way out there", who only reviews our life and rewards at some future time. Rather, Paul views God as actively present. Godliness is not practiced simply because God will later review our lives and reward us according to the value of our life, rather the "living God" is involved in our lives now and our godly behavior has value and rewards in the present. All worth, all value, all godliness is actuated by our present hope on this "living God."

This "living God" is actively involved in His creation, but specifically, He is involved with humanity. For, Paul states, "(God) is the Savior of all people." Salvation is not limited to believers but in a lesser sense He is the actual Savior of all. It is a present condition of all, not a hypothetical potential (unlimited atonement). All have not received the full benefits of salvation (universalism) reserved specifically for the believer, but all have received some benefits. Paul state, "He is (present tense) the Savior of all."

The question should not be asked, "Is God the Savior of all?" but, "to what extent, or how, is He the Savior of all?" For Paul clearly declares that salvation for the believer involves more than it does for the unbeliever when he says, "who is the Savior of all people, especially the believers." Thus, though God is especially the Savior of believers, he none the less is in some way also the Savior of all.

The thesis, God's wrath postponed recognizes the universal nature of salvation, for all have been saved from the immediate wrath of God at the crucifixion of Christ, thus all have been saved. Yet, "God's wrath postponed" also recognizes that only believers in the person and work of Jesus Christ will escape the wrath which is to come. Only believers in God's Son walk in true godliness and experience the "living God" in the present life and the life to come. Thus, God is "the Savior of all men, especially of believers."

III. I John 2:2

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.

That Jesus Christ is the propitiation⁵¹ for the sins of believers has seldom been disputed among Christians. The fundamental question is who is John referring to when he speaks of the "whole world"⁵² and how is Christ's death a propitiation for them? Is the death of Christ applied for the whole world the same way that it applied for believers? Or, is it even possible that when John says "whole world" he is referring to the world of believers?

⁵¹ for the meaning of propitiation the discussion in the earlier chapter.

⁵² for the various meaning of "world" see discussion in earlier chapter.

In order to identify the "whole world" it might help to know who "our sins" refers to. The difficulty with the epistle is that, besides knowing "our" refers to believers John never clearly identifies who specifically the recipients of his letter are.

Gary Long⁵³ and Arthur W. Pink⁵⁴ argue for an ethnological interpretation, that is, the recipients were believing Jews. Thus, Christ was the propitiation, not just for believing Jews, but also for the whole believing world of non-Jews as well. But, to say that "our" in "our sins" refers to believing Jews seems forced. It seems odd that John would close a letter to believing Jews with a warning to "guard yourselves from idols" (5:21).

Moderate Calvinism attempts to resolve the issue by allowing for a generic view (1 John was written to a general audience), but explains the passage as actual for believers but only sufficient or potential for the world. Paul Enns is representative when he says, "John indicates the propitiation is 'for our sins...but also for those of the whole world'. Christ's death was a substitutionary death that made provision for believers, but John emphasizes the sufficiency is 'for the whole world.' Although the whole world is not saved, because Christ is God His death is sufficient for the entire world; it is, however, effectual only in those who believe."⁵⁵

But, if the whole world is not saved, how can Christ be the propitiation for the whole world. The text uses the present tense, "he is the propitiation for our sins, and not only ours, but for the whole world." Christ isn't potentially the propitiation for the sins of the world. He "is" the propitiation for the sins of the world. He postponed the Father's wrath, thus saving the entire world from the immediate judgement of God.

Most interpretations for the meaning of "whole world" have to first resolve who "our" is in "our sins". *God's wrath postponed* does not force that we make this distinction. If John is writing a generic letter to be read by any believer (I don't believe this), a geographical letter to specific group of known believers (most likely view), or to a group of believing Jews this interpretation is applicable. Christ died for all, for all still live, and thus all have been saved.

Our conclusion is that Christ received the wrath of God for all men, and saved all from his physical wrath at the time of the Cross. Christ is not just the propitiation of our sins (believers), but he is also the propitiation for the sins of the entire world.

IV. Romans 5:12-21

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned-- for until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many. The gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification. For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. So then as through one

⁵³ Long, Gary D., Particular Atonement. Presbyterian Reformed Publishing Co., 1977. pp. 94,95.

⁵⁴ Arthur W. Pink, *The Atonement* (Venice, Florida: Chapel Library, a.d.), pp. 13-14.

⁵⁵ Enns, Paul P. *The Moody Handbook of Theology*. Chicago, Ill.: Moody Press, 1997, c1989.

transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous. The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. [Romans 5:12-21]

The importance and complexities of the issues surrounding Romans 5:12-21 makes it in the eyes of many expositors one of the most difficult passages in the New Testament. One theologian has stated, "If you wish to know whether a man is a theologian, turn to his Greek New Testament, and if it opens on its own accord to the fifth chapter of Romans, and you find the pages worn and brown you may safely set him down as a devotee of the sacred science (referring to theology)".⁵⁶ Although there are many difficult issues regarding the text, none is more relevant than the issue of how to understand Paul's use of "all men" in verse 18. To do so requires that we look at the entire passage and grasp the development of his argument.

Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned-- [Romans 5:12]

Adam was the first man in the world and the father of humanity. Adam also committed the first act of disobedience. His one act of disobedience introduced sin into the world. The result of that sin was that the judgement "death" spread like cancer to all subsequent humanity. The existence of death is the evidence of the presence of the sinful condition of mankind. By "all" Paul means humanity "generically", that is everyone without exception. Christ is left out of the equation at this stage because Paul is referring to the condition of humanity prior to Christ coming into the world. Christ did not sin, nor was he a sinner. The next verse clearly demonstrates the historical sequence that Paul had in mind.

for until the Law sin was in the world, but sin is not imputed when there is no law. [Romans 5:13]

God's Law for Adam was the command, "do not eat. . .". Thus Adam was held accountable for his actions on the basis of law. Law defines sin, so that law accentuates the sinfulness of sin and increases the accountability for performing the sinful act. It is not that men had no conscience or that they didn't know the difference between right and wrong, it was simply that not having law expressly defined weakened the verdict for the sinful act.

Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. [Romans 5:14]

But even though they didn't have the Law death still reigned over mankind in the time period between Adam and Moses, even with those that had not acted contrary to an expressed command, such as the action of Adam.

⁵⁶ Chafer, Lewis S. Systematic Theology. Vol 2 p. 297.

That God held man accountable apart from the Law is evident in the judgement of the flood. Man still had a conscience and knew the difference between right and wrong. Mankind did not have to act contrary to stated law to be held accountable for his sin. After all, wasn't Satan's statement, "you will be like divine beings who know good and evil." Thus, death reigned over man.

Now, Paul shifts his emphasis towards Christ. Adam was a type of the one to come. Let us see how Paul applies this and develops his argument.

But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many. [Romans 5:15]

How is Adam a type of Christ? Both gave something to mankind. Paul's analogy is not of comparison however, but of contrast (thus some would call it an anti or arch-type). Adam gave mankind something detrimental to his welfare. Christ, in contrast, gave man something of abundant benefit. Adam's act of disobedience (transgression) gave mankind death. Christ obedience provided something abundantly more beneficial.

Why does Paul say "the many died" instead of "all" died? It maybe that to say "all" would be inaccurate, for Enoch did not die. Paul may also have in mind Elijah, who though was after Moses was before Christ. Either way, to say "all" died would be contrary to fact. Not that these were without sin, but that they did not receive the judgement of Adam's sin by dying. Paul also does not use "all" in reference to the "gift of the one Man, Jesus Christ." Rather he says this gift "abound to the many (people)." Since Paul uses "many" instead of "all" to exclude some from the effects of the transgression, it would appear that Paul does the same in reference to those who are benefited by the gift. Paul elsewhere defines the effects of the gift as eternal life. It would appear that the "many" are those who receive the complete benefit from the gift as a result of Christ's obedience. People receive the gift of eternal life by believing that Christ died on their behalf. Thus, the "many" in this verse refers to a select number of people from "all" humanity.

The gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned; for on the one hand the judgment arose from one transgression resulting in condemnation, but on the other hand the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification. [Romans 5:16]

Paul continues to explain the contrast between Christ's gift of grace resulting from obedience with Adam's contribution (I prefer not to call it gift) of death resulting from his transgression. But transgressions were not Adam's property alone. The judgement of death was the result of Adam's one transgression. His one transgression acted like a communicable disease multiplying into many transgressions spreading through all subsequent humanity. Christ's gift was given, not just to deal with the effects of Adam's one transgression, but to counter the effects of the "many" subsequent transgression. Adam's one transgression resulted in condemnation, yet Christ's actions came about, not just because of the one transgression, but as a result of the many transgressions that followed. Justification is not just for the transgression of Adam, but for the many subsequent transgressions as well.

For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ. [Romans 5:17]

Paul contrasts the reign of death that resulted from Adam's transgression, with the eschatological reign of "those that receive the grace and the gift of righteousness". Death is personified as having reign over all that were born after Adam. The reign of death will be replaced by the reign of real people that receive the "abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness in life" through the One, Jesus Christ.

It is significant that "Death reigned" is aorist tense, but "those who. . . will reign in life" is future tense. Adam transgressed! Death Reigned! But if those who will reign are not yet reigning then does death still reign? or, what reigns in the interim? After all, don't all still die?

John states that the last acts of God will be to destroy death, "And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire" [Revelation 20:13-14]. So, between the time of Christ work on the cross and the end mentioned by John death has a presence.

Paul makes it clear elsewhere, that although death still is, it is impotent. Though we die, we do not suffer the impact of death. Paul states, "But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory. "O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR VICTORY? O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?" "The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" [1 Corinthians 15:54-57]. Sin no longer condemns, law has lost its power to judge, thus death, like a bee without a stinger has no way to deliver its poison.

Paul's use of "many more" should not be viewed quantitatively. He is not saying "many more" people will reign in righteousness than were affected by the transgression of Adam. It is an absolute certainty that this righteousness is qualitatively superior to the judgement.

So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. [Romans 5:18]

Paul concludes that the one act of each man, Adam and Christ, had a universal implication on mankind. Adam's transgression resulted in the condemnation of the entire human race. Christ's righteousness resulted in the justification of life to all humanity.

Although some theologians have questioned the universal implications of Adam's sin bringing condemnation, the vast majority would not be in disagreement on the generic use of Paul's comment regarding Adam's offense. A literal understanding of this verse, the surrounding context, and Paul's other writings make it inexcusable to believe that he teaches anything but that "all" humans were condemned by Adam's transgression. Even though Christ was without sin, he shared in the judgement and condemnation of man. Thus, although "many" were accounted as sinners (Christ himself excluded) "all" were condemned (including Christ, because of his voluntary association with mankind) as a result of the transgression.

The greater amount of disagreement arises on how to understand Christ's "act of righteousness resulting in justification for 'all' men." Did he provide: justification for everyone

generically, thus all are justified; the ability for everyone to receive justification; the potential for everyone to be justified; or does "all" mean something less than each and every human being?

The thesis of "God's wrath postponed" recognizes the "many" and the "all" of Romans 5:12-18 literally. Christ's sacrifice was viewed as a judicial act that halted judgement upon the cosmos. Thus "all" humanity was viewed as justified by the actions of Christ by the Father. Not that man has any righteousness in himself, but rather the righteousness of Christ covers humanity⁵⁷, providing protection from immediate judgement.

In addition, God's focus shifts from man's guilt in Adam to the indebtedness of mankind to Christ. "All" are indebted to Christ because he saved "all" from the immediate wrath of God in connection with the association of judgement in Adam's transgression. This includes not just the generation that was spared from the wrath, but also every subsequent generation, for they owe their existence to Christ. Now that they have been justified by Christ they are accountable to Him. Refusal to acknowledge His sacrifice becomes the basis of judgement and the primary sin of man.

For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous. [Romans 5:19]

Paul shifts his emphasis from the past and to some degree present condition of all humanity to the future condition of those made righteous in Christ. In verse 18 Paul was making a declaration of the universal effects of Adam's transgression - condemnation. "All" were condemned as a result of his transgression. In this passage Paul is referring to the declaration of humanity as sinners as an effect of Adam's transgression. Though Jesus was condemned and thus was part of the "all" in verse 18, he was never a sinner. Paul, recognizing the exception of Christ rightly refers to sinners as "many".

Paul also shifts from the general condition of "all" humanity to a position of the select righteous from within this group in the future. Not all will be made righteous, only those that acknowledge Christ and receive the gift of righteousness through him. These are the same as the ones that reign in the future (vs. 17).

The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, [Romans 5:20]

Paul contrasts between Law and Grace. Transgression existed prior to Law, but because Law defined and explained the transgression it left the transgressor without excuse, thus the transgressor, having the Law was guiltier than the transgressor without the Law. Law specifies commands, "you shall not", thus placing the transgressions in the likeness of Adam's. Transgression then is a direct act of disobedience against the commands. Such transgressions are without excuse.

But if Law increased the intensity of condemnation associated with transgression, then Law also intensifies the super-abundance of Grace, for even transgressions that are in direct disobedience to God's commands are covered by the righteousness provided through the obedience of Christ.

⁵⁷ see earlier chapter on the Old Testament meaning of kaphor.

so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. [Romans 5:21]

Throughout much of Romans Grace is contrasted with the Law. But Law was given to the Jews, a select group of humanity. Grace is not just for those that are under the Law, but for all humanity. Whereas only the Jews were under the obligations of the Law, all people are under Sin. Thus, Paul's contrast of Grace shifts from the Law to a contrast with sin. Why? Because Law was given to the Jews, but Grace was given to "all". Thus, Grace extends super-abundantly beyond the Law to embrace the whole of humanity. Paul is not writing just to the Jews but to humanity in general.

Paul brings the typology between Adam and Christ to conclusion. He repeats, sin reigned in the form of the personification of death. In contrast, Grace would reign (also a personification), not with sin but righteousness to eternal life through the reality of the actual person of Jesus Christ. Where sin once reigned in death, Grace now reigns in life. Where there is no death there is no end to life, thus eternal life.

Some discussion could be made regarding Paul's use of a subjunctive aorist, translated by the NAS "would reign". The Subjunctive mood has been called the mood of probability. That doesn't mean that there is uncertainty, in fact when used with the Greek $\iota\nu\alpha$, it can mean "with the result of".⁵⁸ The question in verse 21 is whether this should be translated in the past tense (NAS) or in the future tense "will reign" (NET Bible). The later is consistent with the future tense in verse 17 which speaks of those made righteous through Christ reigning in the future, however, here the focus is not on the people that will reign but on Grace reigning. Grace did not have to wait for those that would be declared righteous to take authority over death. Rather, Grace took control, began to reign and will progressively build its reign until death is thrown into the Lake of Fire. Thus Grace reigns. Grace reigned, in that Christ's sacrifice defeated death for all humanity by forfeiting the immediate wrath of God at the time of the cross. Grace presently reigns by declaring those who acknowledge Christ have victory over death, procuring for themselves eternal absence of judgement and death. Grace will reach the climax and be proclaimed absolute ruler when there is no more death. At that point there will be no more sin, Law, or death, just righteousness, life and super-abundant Grace.

V. John 1:29

The next day he saw Jesus coming to him and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! [John 1:29]

John the Baptist viewed his purpose as, "the voice of one shouting in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way for the Lord'" (John 1:23; Isa. 40:3). He understood his unique calling was to set the stage for the coming Messiah. His first proclamation of the Christ summarizes the total ministry of Christ's mission on earth, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin the

⁵⁸ John 3:16 and Philippians 2:10 are additional examples of the use of the subjunctive mood used in this manner. Although John 3:16 is most often translated "should not perish" it must be understood that that the issue is not indefinite or merely probable, in other words Jesus is making an emphatic statement that "they will not perish". The same is true of Philippians 2:10. Though translated "in order that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord", Paul was not making an indefinite statement. It is obvious from the context that he believes that "every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord".

world!" (John 1:29). This short proclamation 1) "Behold the Lamb of God" identified Christ's mission with the Old Testament Passover, 2) "who takes away the sin" foretold the nature and purpose of Messiah's sacrifice, and 3) "of the world" explained the universal implications of His sacrifice.

First, Jesus as "the Lamb of God" is a proclamation of his identification with the Passover. He celebrated the Passover feast with the apostles just prior to the crucifixion, was removed from the cross just before the celebration of the Passover and Paul refers to "Christ our Passover" (1 Cor. 5:7). The church has for centuries viewed the Lord's supper as Christ's identification with the Passover.

The Passover celebration commemorated God's last miraculous judgement upon Egypt in His deliverance of Israel from bondage (Exodus 12:1-42). In the actual event of Passover Moses instructed the children of Israel to sacrifice a lamb and apply blood at the top and sides of the doorframe at the entry of each of their homes. God would inflict his judgement on Egypt and its gods (12:12)⁵⁹, putting to death the firstborn of each household. God would bypass or pass-over only those homes marked by the blood of the lamb. This blood of the innocent lamb was God's means of covering over (atone) those that were to be spared from His wrath. The judgement of death was upon the lamb as a substitute for the firstborn children of Israel.

Although not called such, the Passover has all the elements of "atonement" (Hebrew Kaphor) and is the first of a series of atonements in Israel's history.⁶⁰ The subsequent atonements would climax in the ultimate atonement, the person of Jesus Christ who is rightfully declared by John, the "Lamb of God". This blameless lamb was sacrificed to provide the means for a sinful and helpless humanity (Rm. 5:6) avoid God's judgement. Christ is the door and the cross is the doorframe between heaven and earth (John 10:7-9). The blood of the Lamb was placed on the doorframe. God's response to the obedience of the Christ was to pass-over those for whom the Lamb was slain. Humanity was thus spared God's immediate physical judgement. The yearly celebrations of Passover commemorated God's deliverance of the nation's firstborn children, and anticipated the deliverance that was yet to be provided by the sacrifice of God's Firstborn⁶¹ - Jesus Christ.

Second, in addition to linking Christ to the Passover, John also says of Christ, that He, "takes away the sin". It is significant that he uses the singular "sin" rather than "sins". If Christ had taken away the "sins" of the world then there would be no sins in the world. The universalist would be correct in asserting that all are saved, for there would be no bases for judgement. But Christ didn't remove the "sins" of the world. Rather, he removed "the sin" of the world. Exactly what is the sin which Christ removed? Paul gives us the best clue by proclaiming Christ to be the last Adam. Christ's obedience counters effect/s of Adam's sin of disobedience.⁶² We know the

⁵⁹ The text says that the judgement was on "Egypt. . . and all its gods." Each of the plagues appears to have been directed at one of the gods of Egypt. Pharaoh was considered by the Egyptians the son of Ray and was viewed as a supreme god of Egypt. By taking the life of Pharaoh's son, the God of Israel was executing judgement on one of the gods of Egypt and in doing so demonstrating His superiority over this god.

⁶⁰ Although illusions to atonement exist earlier in Scripture (God's sacrifice for Adam and Eve in the garden), the terminology and development of atonement is not found until Exodus 29. After which it becomes a major theme throughout the remainder of the Torah. See the later chapter on Atonement for a more complete understanding.

⁶¹ Christ, the firstborn of God and of Creation replaced the firstborn of Israel. Outside of the scope of this paper also is the idea of Christ as firstborn replacing the birthright of the first man, Adam. The issue of transfer of sovereignty and firstborn rights are in view.

⁶² see my later comments on Romans 5.

nature of Adam's sin, and we also understand the obedient actions Christ took to counter Adam's sin. What we must ask, however, is exactly what effect/s of Adam's sin did Christ counter?

Adam's disobedient act was the first "sin" in the world. By introducing sin into the world it set a pattern of sin for the world. His one sin had several effects upon the world. First, it condemned the world. As a result of that one sin the judgement of death was pronounced upon the world. Regardless of an individual's personal righteousness the declaration of death was upon him, and all had to face death. Second, every person after Adam was influenced by the presence of sin to the degree that each and every person committed acts of sin. Thus, humanity was condemned by sin on two levels. The first by being in a world condemned as a result of Adam's sin, and so by association with Adam held accountable for Adam's sin;⁶³ and second, as a result that every human sins (Rm. 3:23), each person is accountable for his own sins. The general result of sin is that the mind of man is spiritually darkened, insensitive, and incapable of doing anything to deliver himself from the universal judgement for sin. In this state of darkness he is declared dead in his trespasses and sins (Eph. 2:1-5; Col. 2:13).

How did the obedience of the last Adam counter the effects of the disobedience of the first Adam? The obedience of Christ brought to judgement the disobedient act of "the Sin" of the first Adam. Thus, the world's condemnation on the basis of the Adam's "Sin" is "taken away". Though the condemnation of this sin is taken away the consequential effects (or remaining residue) of Adam's sin still remains. Every person is a sinner, not just because he was in Adam, but because every person has sinned (Rm. 3:23). The universal condemnation of humanity based on Adam's "sin" was taken away. Each person is thus held accountable, not because of Adam's sin, but because of his own sins.

Our third point then is that Christ is "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the World". His sacrifice had universal implications. It is the "sin" of Adam, but it was the "sin" that condemned the "world" and was thus "the sin of the world". By taking away this blanket, universal condemnation of humanity Christ provided the means of dealing with the condemnation of humanity based on individual sins. Condemnation and death still remains in the world because sin is still present in the world. All humanity is still under judgement, because all still sin. The world is still condemned, but not on the basis of Adam's sin. Adam's sin was judged at the cross of Christ. Adam's sin will not be the bases of final judgement. Each person is held accountable apart from the first Adam:

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire (Rev 20:11-15).

Nothing is said about final judgement being based in original sin. No one will be able to stand before God and blame Adam for his sins. Original sin cast its cloud, and its effects are still

⁶³ Theologically referred to as the doctrine of Original Sin.

present, but Christ (the last Adam) took away the universal condemnation based on Adam's sin. In doing so, however, the world became indebted to Christ. At the death of Christ, the world was under the universal condemnation of Adam's sin. The world added condemnation to condemnation by murdering the sinless Son of God. But Christ interceded for man, and received man's judgement upon Himself. He thus judiciously cancelled the immediate physical judgement and cancelled out the universal condemnation based on Adam's sin (In this context He is the Savior of the World). In doing so, the world is indebted to Christ, and all judgement is placed in the person of Christ. Thus, final judgement is dependent on one's individual response to Christ.

The entire world, meaning the physical world and the world of humanity, was saved by Christ from the immediate physical wrath of God at the time of the cross; thus Christ is the Savior of the World. But each person is still accountable for his/her own sins. Christ's sacrifice sufficiently paid the price needed to forgive these sins as well. However, because they are the personal sins of the individual, each individual must acknowledge Christ to have these sins forgiven. Salvation from future wrath is dependent on acknowledging Christ for the forgiveness of personal sins. When one trusts Christ for the forgiveness of his sins, Christ sacrifice pays the debt and the individual's name is registered in the "book of life" thus canceling the wrath of the "lake of fire". Each human is a sinner because he sins, but the sin that determines one's future destiny is the one sin of denying the Savior who died for sin. The rejection of Christ leaves the person accountable for his sins (John 3:17-18).

VI. II Corinthians 5:14-21

For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer. Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. [2 Corinthians 5:14-21]

In this great passage we see God reconciling people to Himself through the death of Christ.⁶⁴ Who is being reconciled? We know that Christ died for "all" (vs.14), God has reconciled "us" to Himself through Christ (vs.18) and "in Christ He was reconciling the 'world' to Himself" (vs.19). But what does all this mean? Have all been reconciled in the sense that the entire world is forgiven and will never be judged (Universalism)? Have all been reconciled in the sense that Adam's sin is no longer imputed but men are now responsible for their own sins (some forms of Arminianism)? Does all simply mean the world other than Jews, that is reconciliation in no longer for the Jews but for "all", both Jews and Gentiles (some Strict Calvinist)? Or, has the world been

⁶⁴ see the previous chapter on reconciliation.

reconciled in the sense that Christ's death was sufficient for all, but efficient only for the elect? That is, the death provided the means for all, but only those moved by the Spirit are capable of appropriating it (most Moderate Calvinist)? Just how literal should we understand "all" and "world"⁶⁵

For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; [2 Corinthians 5:14]

Paul is speaking to a Gentile audience about the far-reaching effects of Christ's death. It is not Paul's love for Christ, but Christ love that compelled Christ to do what he did that controls Paul. Is it conceivable that Paul is saying to them, "For the love of Christ Controls us (believing or apostolic Jews), having concluded this, that one (Christ) died for all (both Jew and Gentile believers), therefore all (Jewish and Gentile believers) died"? When Paul desires to emphasize the inclusion of the Gentile community into the program of God doesn't he clearly say it, or makes it clear within the context (i.e., Eph. 2:11-16)?

Unless "all" is clearly declared to be otherwise, it seems better to understand "all" to mean "all mankind, excluding none". But are they reconciled in the sense that "all" have been forgiven and will be omitted from future judgement? No! Christ died for "all" in that his death stopped the immediate execution of the Father's judgement upon the world. Judgement was executed. It was placed upon Christ instead of the world. Therefore, when the Father looks upon the world he sees a world that has been judged, and though alive declared dead, because all died in the death of Christ.

and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. [2 Corinthians 5:15]

Though physically alive, the declaration of death is removed only when they acknowledge that Christ died for them. When someone acknowledges Christ dying for them they participate in His resurrection and the declaration of death is removed. There was a purpose in Christ dying for all. He did not die so that men should continue to live in sin, as Paul puts it, "so that they who live (still all) might no longer live in themselves." They had been condemned because they lived for themselves. But now Paul declares that they are alive because of Him (Christ), therefore, instead of living for themselves "everyone" ought (indebted) to live for the one who received their judgement and proved it by rising from the dead.

Therefore from now on we recognize no one according to the flesh; even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him in this way no longer. [2 Corinthians 5:16]

If we no longer live for ourselves, but for the one who died and rose on our behalf, our view of "all" people has changed. Living for Christ, we see people through the eyes of Christ. We see them through the eyes of love that compelled Him to die for them. We see them as persons for whom Christ died.

⁶⁵ see earlier discussion on world.

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. [2 Corinthians 5:17]

Christ death halted the wrath of God, but it did not change the nature of man, nor the conditions of the world. By receiving the Father's wrath Christ saved all from immediate physical wrath. But mankind is still declared dead unless an acknowledgement is made of what Christ did. Unless one declares Christ he is still dead and unable to participate in the full benefit of Christ's death, and so he cannot participate in the power of the resurrection. The resurrection defeated death. Our participation in Christ's resurrection removes the former declaration of death and makes us a new life in Christ.

Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, [2 Corinthians 5:18]

The entire program has been God's, from its initiation to its finish. Man is the beneficiary, but not by his own efforts. Paul focuses first on those that have a special place in reconciliation. The believer has been reconciled into a special working relationship with the Father. We who were alienated have now been given the responsibility of ministry, a ministry of reconciliation.

namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. [2 Corinthians 5:19]

What is this ministry of reconciliation? It is the message that Christ paid the price required to bring about reconciliation. Christ reconciled the world by receiving the judgement of the world upon Himself, postponing wrath upon the world and giving the world a new relationship with Him. The world's sins were not held against them, and thus the world was spared judgement. The "we" refers to Paul and the disciples of Christ, probably not just the apostles, but it doesn't appear to be including the Corinthians at this point. He perceives it is his responsibility to bring the world from the general reconciliation (the postponement of wrath) into a special reconciliation (a personal relationship with Christ).

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. [2 Corinthians 5:20]

The world has been reconciled, but Paul sees himself as one who represents God appealing to the Corinthians to enter into a more specific reconciliation. A reconciliation that will free them from future judgement. It is not enough to be spared from the past wrath, "acknowledge what Christ has done and enter into an eternal relationship with God. Thus, be totally reconciled to Him."

He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. [2 Corinthians 5:21]

Christ was sinless. Not that he didn't know what sin was, but that there was no sin in Him. His sinlessness qualified him to be a sacrifice on our behalf, so that (with the purpose of) "we might

become the righteousness of God in Him." Righteousness is not something that has been imputed to the world, neither is it a definite state of being for the world. Christ was made sin for all, but only those that acknowledge such can have his righteousness imputed to their account. The Father sees those who have placed faith in His son covered by the son's righteousness. If we wear His righteousness we are expected to live in a manner consistent with that righteousness.

VII. II Peter 2:1

But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. [2 Peter 2:1]

Peter warns the followers of Christ to be cautious. There was among them some that appear to be prophets and teachers, but who were teaching contrary to sound doctrine. They are like false prophets that came before them. These present and future teachers will perish like the false prophets before them. Peter spends the rest of Chapter 2 illustrating with Old Testament examples of those that were like these heretics.

The point of the passage that is central to our study, is the phrase, "even denying the Master (or Lord) who bought them". It is impossible to deny that Peter is making a declaration that these false prophets, false teachers, heretics, in some sense have been bought by the Lord. The phrase is difficult for the universalist in that even though the passage suggests Christ dying for all, there is a definite judgement of God's wrath upon some, thus all will not be saved. The universalist's argument crumbles.

Arminians have held that the passage teaches the possibility that Christ's followers losing their salvation. If this passage were to be considered in isolation to all the very clear New Testament passages teaching to the contrary (cf. John 3:16; 5:24; 10:28-29), it might be plausible. But understanding God's revelation, requires that we either attempt to find a solution to perceived contradictions by looking for a possible alternative understanding of the more obscure passages (this one), accept contradictions as being answerable only within the wisdom and knowledge God, or hold judgement until a reasonable solution to the contradiction can be proposed. Theologians who believe God as rational, has created a rational universe and has given us revelation that is reasonable (and without error) will strive for rational or at least evidential understanding.

Moderate Calvinists usually hold, "They were 'redeemed' in the sense that Christ paid the redemptive price for their salvation, but they did not apply it to themselves and so were not saved. Christ's death is "sufficient" for all (1 Tim. 2:6; Heb. 2:9; 1 John 2:2), but is "efficient" only for those who believe.⁶⁶ Thus redemption is hypothetical, they have been bought but it has absolutely no effect unless they appropriate it. So, they are potentially redeemed, but not actually redeemed. It's kind of like someone paying another persons jail bond and the person won't leave his jail cell. He doesn't appropriate what has been done for him. All legal barriers are removed but they must take action and appropriate it.

There is a problem with the above analogy, however. Whether a person gets up and walks out of the prison or not has nothing to do with the legal fact that he is free. He may not act like a free man, but because the payment is made, the declaration of freedom means he is legally free whether

⁶⁶Walvoord, John F., Roy B. Zuck, and Dallas Theological Seminary. The Bible Knowledge Commentary : An Exposition of the Scriptures. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1983-c1985.

he acts upon it or not. There is no hypothetical or potential freedom here. Even if he remains in jail he is still a free man. There is no such thing as a hypothetically or potentially free man. If the Bible says a person has been bought, it isn't a potential or hypothetical purchase, in some sense since he has received a benefit from the purchase whether he appropriates the full benefit or not.

Some Consistent Calvinists hold that 1 Peter 1:1 should not be understood in the context of salvation at all. One view, sometimes referred to as the "temporal deliverance view" understands the heretics as physically delivered from the sinful defilement or pollution of the world. Their profession of Christ, though false, puts them in the community with the Saints which in a sense protects them from the sins of the outside world, thus they are viewed in a temporary deliverance. The problem with this view is that it doesn't deal with the full meaning of "bought". Were they bought or not? Little is stated how redemption explains this view.

A second non-salvation view of the passage, called "the sovereign creation view" understands "Lord" not as the Lord of New Testament Salvation, but as "Lord who owns the covenant nation of Israel", thus the Lord that bought Israel out of Egypt. The false teacher is one that has denied the Lord who bought Israel out of bondage and 2 Peter 2:1 is taken from Deuteronomy 32. Gary Long states,

the point that Peter seems to be making in referring to Deuteronomy 32:6 in 2 Peter 2:1 is that 'just as God had sovereignly acquired Israel out of Egypt (including 'his children' as well as the 'spot' among them which was a 'perverse' and crooked generation,' Deut. 32:5) in order to make her a covenant nation spiritually and nationally because He had created her for this purpose, so Christ, the sovereign Lord, acquired the false teachers (spots and blemishes, 2 Peter 2:13) in order to make them a part of the covenant nation of God in the flesh because He had created them, within the mystery of His providence, for the purpose of bringing glory to Himself through their foreordination unto condemnation (cf. 2 Peter 2:12; Jude 4).⁶⁷

This interpretation assumes that the readers are Jews and that the false teachers he refers to are Jews. If he speaks of present or future false teachers, why would he speak of them in the context of the Old Covenant? Peter says, "they will secretly introduce false heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them". Peter's examples of comparative behavior and judgement are from the Old Testament, but not the nature of the heresies. The future tense is not speaking of individuals of the Jewish Covenant, for the Jewish Covenant has been replaced with a New Covenant.

Long is on to something though. He recognizes the principle that God, in saving a few, saves the many. The Lord purchased all of Israel for the sake of the elect of Israel. This principle is true throughout the Old Testament. God used Joseph to save Israel, but in saving Israel he also saved the surrounding nations. Abraham saved Lot, but in doing so he also saved the king of Sodom and the city of Sodom (temporarily). By saving Noah, God saved mankind.

The thesis of, "God's wrath postponed" states that Christ purchased the cosmos and saved it from the immediate physical wrath of God at the time of the cross. Thus, every man, woman, child and creature living at the time of the cross were spared from the wrath of God. Thus, every man, woman, child and creature living today have a debt to Jesus Christ for making a purchase that gave them their present existence. He is not just their creator. He is also their physical Savior in that "all", including false teachers have been "redeemed" from the immediate wrath of God.

⁶⁷ Long, Gary D. Definite Atonement. Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co. 1977. p.77

Conclusion

Jesus took away the sin of the World (John 1:29). In doing so He delivered the world from God's immediate physical wrath at the time of the Atonement. The entire Creation, which includes believers and nonbelievers in Christ, shared in a general salvation through Christ from divine judgment at the atonement. Thus the implications of the atonement extend beyond the elect in Christ. Even as God provides a Common Grace for all humanity through the Creation (there is physical sustenance for all living beings), so has the atonement provided a Common Grace of deliverance at the atonement of Christ of the Creation. All have been saved from God's wrath at the atonement.

Only believers in Christ receive the Special Grace of deliverance from the world's present condemning influence, and will be saved from God's future judgement at the return of Christ. As Savior, Christ is the propitiation for the world, but especially believers (1 John 1:1-2); He is the redeemer of the world, but especially believers (2 Pet. 2:1); and He has reconciled the world, but especially believers (2 Cor. 5:18,19). Thus Christ is "the savior of all humanity, but especially believers (1 Tim. 4:10). Nonbelievers, by denying Christ, remain in their sins and are storing up wrath for the day of wrath. Believers, by believing in Christ, have the debt of their sins cancelled, thus exempting themselves from wrath in the day of wrath.

The object of God's wrath is everything defiled by sin. Sin is not an abstract, viewed as separate from sinners. God doesn't simply judge sin. Everything defiled by sin is condemned with sin and must be purged of sin. Not just humanity's sins, but the entire creation, the dominion of humanity has been defiled by sin. Therefore, judgement of sin extends to the whole Creation.

Sin's defilement of the creation alienated God from His creation. God is love, but He is also truth, righteous, justice, and holy. The nature of God's character cannot be compromised. His hatred of sin is consistent with the attributes of His being. For Him to ignore sin on the basis of His love would be to deny Himself of His own nature.

God's love, justice, righteousness, and holiness (in addition to all His attributes) are expressed to their fullness in the person of His Son. Jesus Christ is the communication of God's character to humanity. The Atonement (kaphar, propitiation, redemption, and reconciliation) communicates to humanity the fullest expression of God's Character. To know Christ is to know the character of God.

Christ's redeemed (purchased) humanity and thus saved all people from the just wrath of God. The result of the purchase is that all humanity is indebted to Christ. It is because Creation is indebted to Christ that all judgement has been handed over to Christ. One's acknowledgement of (belief in) Christ's atonement is now the basis for forgiveness from sins and thus the means for deliverance from final judgement (John 3:16-18).

The wrath of God is not a pleasant subject. After all, isn't the emphasis of the New Testament the love of God? God is love (1 John 4:8,16) and sent His son into the world as a result of his love for the world (John 3:16). But, in emphasizing the love of God it is an error to omit the teaching of divine wrath. The same passage that teaches God's love also speaks of judgement (John 3:18). In fact, omitting, perverting or watering down the teaching of God's wrath weakens the understanding of the intensity of God's love for the world. It is because of His love for the world that he sent His Son to provide a means of purging from sin and escape from the consequences of sin. There is, after all, no need for a Savior unless there is something to be saved from.

"God's Wrath Postponed" teaches that Christ saved the entire world from the physical wrath of God at the time of the crucifixion. The universal passages of Scripture (Col. 1:19-20; 1 Tim. 4:9,10; 1 John 1:2; Rm. 5:18; John 1:29; 2 Cor. 5:18, 19; 2 Pet. 2:1) teach an "actual" salvation of the entire world, rather than a "potential" or "provisional" salvation (Moderate Calvinism). The world is not just the world of believers, or the world of Gentile believers combined with Jewish believers (Strict Calvinism). This "actual" salvation does not proclaim a salvation of the entire world from God's future wrath (universalism). Neither does it overemphasize the free will of man and foreknowledge of God at the expense of the clear Biblical teaching of predestination (Arminianism).

"God's Wrath Postponed" is not merely a teaching about the wrath of God, or an attempt to explain the universal passages of Scripture. It is a system of theology that eliminates the anomalies and apparent contradictions found in the other systems. It lends to a stronger literal interpretation of the Scriptures. It attempts to avoid the excesses of philosophical interpretations, and does a better job of harmonizing the New Testament with the Old.

The author believes that God's Word is pure and without error. The perceived contradictions and difficulties of Scripture are not the fault of Scripture, but man's poor attempt at interpreting the Scripture. Theologians formulate theological systems to help grasp and bring consistency to God's Word. Sometimes we become enslaved to the system and force the Scripture's to conform to it. Every system has potential anomalies that threaten the integrity of the system. When anomalies exist within a system, an attempt can be made to explain the anomalies in such a way to fit the system, reform the system to make adjustments for the anomalies, or attempt to create a better system to handle the anomalies. I've attempted the latter.

"God's Wrath Postponed" allows for the integrity of the universal passages to speak literally without sacrificing the integrity of a literal interpretation of passages teaching predestination. Previous systems have compromised one set of passages at the expense of the other. "God's Wrath postponed" is simple, rather than complex. It doesn't require manipulation of the passages to fit into the system, or use complex philosophical explanations of the system or the passages.

It was stated in the introduction, "How the tensions are resolved by the systems have enormous implications to our entire understanding of God's character, His revelation, Christ's mission and message, the presentation of His message, and man's relationship and responsibility to God and man." Though the full the implications of "God's Wrath Postponed" are beyond the intent of this introduction, two implications regarding God's character will be mentioned. Reflecting on the principles and implications of "God's Wrath Postponed" should cause a healthy balance in our perception of 1) the righteousness of God, and 2) the love of God. In regards to righteousness, we should tremble of the knowledge of God's wrath (the wrath that could have been and the wrath that is yet to be) and reflect on Solomon's fundamental principle that Fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge and wisdom (Proverbs 1:7; 9:10). The lopsided emphasis by the misguided proponents of God's love without fear, have put the church in a position of presenting a Gospel without substance. Without the warning of judgement and a God that can and will see judgement to completion, salvation is void of relevance. Regarding love, the provision of salvation from wrath through Christ, first for the elect, but also for Creation and humanity, was and is not an act of necessity, but of the purest display of love the universe has witnessed or can witness. The love of God is best understood within the context of the righteous judgement and justice of God.